

+ DOCTOR WHO • JUMANJI: WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE • STAR TREK: DISCOVERY

THE WORLD'S LONGEST RUNNING MAGAZINE OF CULT ENTERTAINMENT

STARBURST

STAR
THE LAST JEDI
WAR



STARBURST
40 YEARS
ANNIVERSARY
ISSUE

www.starburstmagazine.com

ISSUE
443

STARBURST
PUBLISHING



DECEMBER 2017
Printed in The UK
£4.99

MOVIES ★ TV ★ GAMING ★ AUDIO ★ COMICS ★ BOOKS

**PREMIERES
THIS DECEMBER
ON
horrorchannel**

**SOME KIND OF HATE
THE LESSON
THE EVIL IN US
DON'T BLINK
P2
BLACK CHRISTMAS**

ALSO PREMIERING ON TUESDAY 26TH DECEMBER: LOST IN SPACE SEASON THREE

AMC Networks International © 2017 & © 2017 CBS Broadcasting Inc. All Rights Reserved.



horrorchannel.co.uk

SOME KIND OF HATE FRIDAY 8TH DECEMBER 11PM



THE LESSON SATURDAY 9TH DECEMBER 10.45PM



THE EVIL IN US FRIDAY 15TH DECEMBER 9PM



DON'T BLINK SATURDAY 16TH DECEMBER 9PM



P2 FRIDAY 22ND DECEMBER 10.40PM



BLACK CHRISTMAS SATURDAY 23RD DECEMBER 9PM



horrorchannel

sky 319

149

Freeview 70

Freesat 138



FEATURES

KEEPING THE BALANCE 12

Star Wars Episode VIII is almost here, finally! Let's see what we can expect in our exhaustive preview.

BY GEORGE! 18

He changed cinema, provided us with numerous hours of entertainment, and introduced us to new heroes. All hail Mr Lucas!

A NEW HOPE 22

We're 40! Happy Birthday to us. Find out the real story of our rebirth and rejuvenation, straight from the guys who made it happen - Mike Royce and Kris Heys.

STARBURST MEMORIES 28

Our writers reveal their favourite issues and what made them get involved with the longest running magazine of cult entertainment.

MAKING HIS MARK 36

Get under the skin of our very own cover artist, the fabulous Mr Reihill.

TIME TO PLAY THE GAME 40

Join us in the jungle as the much-loved film **Jumanji** gets an update with this sequel-cum-reboot starring Dwayne Johnson, Jack Black, and Karen Gillen.

HORROR OBSCURA 43

Neil Marshall's **The Descent** is this month's gruesome film that comes under our spotlight.

A LIFE'S ODYSSEY 48

We celebrate what would have been **Arthur C. Clarke's** 100th birthday with a look at the great man's work.

NOT JUST A SIDEKICK 52

To many of us he is the real Robin; actor **Burt Ward** tells all about being the Boy Wonder.

FAREWELL TO TWELVE 58

It's almost Christmas - that only means one thing: a **Doctor Who** special! Say goodbye to both star and showrunner in style with our preview.

THROUGH THE KEYHOLE 62

Ready to tip-toe through the tulips once more as we look forward to **Insidious: The Last Key**, the fourth in the franchise.

JEUX SANS FRONTIERES 68

Join us behind the scenes of the best miniatures producers, **Warlord Games**.

INDEPENDENTS DAY 71

Find out all about **Chris Rodley's** experience with Patrick McGoochan, the subject of his documentary **In My Mind**.

BRYCE PAPENBROOK AND TRINA NISHIMURA 109

We chat to the voice actors who provide the English dub for the hit anime **Attack on Titan**.

REGULARS

THINGS TO COME 8

BLUE BOX SECTION 55

Outside The Box
God Save The Queen

SAUCER SECTION 65

Subspace Relay
Trekologist

CINEMA 75

Reviews

DVD & BLU-RAY 80

Reviews

AUDIO 88

Audiostatic
OST
Reviews

BOOKS 92

Brave New Words
Coming Soon
Book Wormhole
Reviews

COMICS 100

View From The Watchtower
Reviews
Strip

ANIME 106

Anime-Nation
Interview

GAMES 112

Pixel Juice
Retro Bytes
Roll for Damage
Reviews

MERCHANDISE 122

Watto's Emporium

EVENT PROFILE 124

TV ZONE 126

IT'S ONLY A MOVIE 129

40



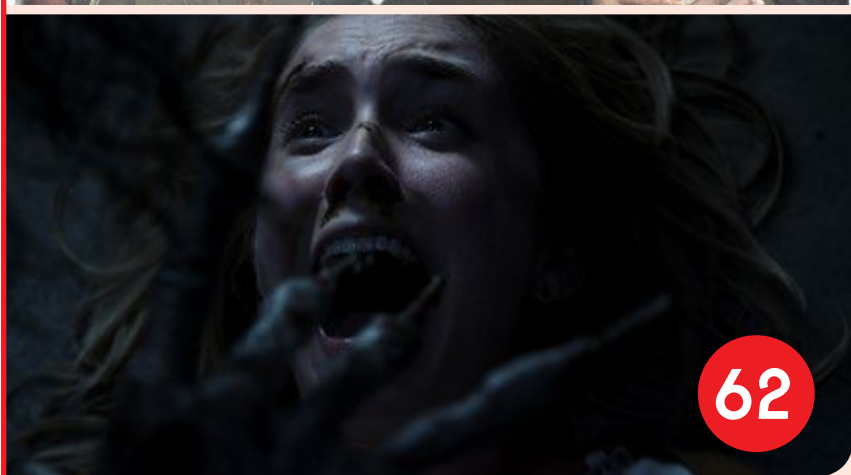
52



58



62



STARBURST

DECEMBER 2017

ISSUE
443

EDITORIAL

Editor

JORDAN "MIKE" ROYCE
jordan.royce@starburstmagazine.com

Assistant Editor

MARTIN UNSWORTH
martin.unsworth@starburstmagazine.com

Honorary Editor-in-Chief

DEZ SKINN

Editor-at-Large

KRIS HEYS

Editorial Assistants

KIERON MOORE TOM ACTON JOE ROYCE

Online Editor

ANDREW POLLARD
andrew.pollard@starburstmagazine.com

Reviews Editor

JACK BOTTOMLEY

Literary Editor

ED FORTUNE
ed.fortune@starburstmagazine.com

Comics Editor

GARETH EVANS
showcasetrips@starburstmagazine.com

Audio Drama Editor

TONY JONES
antony.jones@starburstmagazine.com

ART

Collectors' Edition Cover Artist

MARK REIHILL
markreihill.com

Art Director

JORDAN "MIKE" ROYCE
jordan.royce@starburstmagazine.com

Assistant Art Director

SHAUNA ASKEW
shauna.askew@starburstmagazine.com

Assistant Designers

JON ROBERTS
DAVID CHESTERS

THE GREATEST WRITING TEAM IN THE UNIVERSE

Head Writer

PAUL MOUNT

paul.mount@starburstmagazine.com

Lead Writers

JACK BOTTOMLEY, MICHAEL COLDWELL,
GARETH EVANS, KATE FATHERS, ED FORTUNE,
JOEL HARLEY, CHRIS JACKSON, CHRISTIAN JONES,
TONY JONES, JOHN KNOTT, ANDREW MARSHALL,
IAIN MCNALLY, KIERON MOORE, ROBIN PIERCE,
ANDREW POLLARD, RYAN POLLARD,
LEE PRICE, IAIN ROBERTSON, CALLUM SHEPHARD,
JR SOUTHALL, NICK SPACEK, JOHN TOWNSEND,
PETE TURNER, MARTIN UNSWORTH

Contributors

TOM ACTON, JONATHAN ANDERSON, SOPHIE ATHERTON, JENNIE BAILEY,
PHIL BERESFORD, SIMON BESSON, NICK BLACKSHAW, CHRISTIAN BONE,
JAMES BRIDCUT, FORD MADDOX BROWN, LARA BROWN, COURTNEY BUTTON,
LUKE CHANNELL, SCOTT CLARK, TONY COWIN, DAVID CRAIG, DOMINIC CUTHBERT,
ANNE DAVIES, ALISTER DAVISON, SPLEENY DOTSON, JENNIFER DREWETT,
JONATHAN EDWARDS, JAMES EVANS, KIERAN FISHER, JD GILLAM, JOHN HIGGINS,
TOMMY JAMES, ANIMAL JOHNS, ROBERT KEELING, JAYNE LUTWYCHE, ROBERT MARTIN,
ROD MCCANCE, NEIL MCNALLY, FRED MCNAMARA, HAYDEN MEARS,
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY, STUART MULRAIN, ANDREW MUSK, MARK NEWBOLD,
DOC CHARLIE OUGHTON, JAMES HANTON, SOL HARRIS, PETE HIGGINSON,
WARRICK HORSLEY, LAURA ROBINSON, GRANT KEMPSTER, WHITNEY SCOTT-BAIN,
DANIEL SEDDON, CHLOE SMITH, MIKE SMITH, ADAM STARKEY, JON TOWLSON,
LEONA TURFORD, RICHARD THOMAS, SCOTT VARNHAM, NIGEL WATSON,
SAMANTHA WARD, MATT WELLS, IAN WHITE, THOMAS WINWARD, ZACK THE ZOMBABY

AND TETSUO... THE FEARLESS REPTILE GUARDIAN OF STARBURST HQ!

PRESS

Press Liaison

PHIL PERRY
phil.perry@starburstmagazine.com

PLEASE SEND ALL PRESS RELEASES TO:
press@starburstmagazine.com

Please send all review materials to:
STARBURST MAGAZINE, PO BOX 4508,
MANCHESTER, M61 0GY

ADVERTISING

To advertise with
STARBURST contact:
advertising@starburstmagazine.com

Check out our website for
details on how to get our
DIGITAL EDITION

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Make sure you don't miss an issue of STARBURST by taking advantage of our great
subscription offers at www.starburstmagazine.com

For all subscription enquiries please contact:
starburst@subscriptionhelpline.co.uk - 01293 312175

Starburst Magazine is published monthly by Starburst Publishing Ltd. Nothing in this magazine can be
reproduced in whole or in part without the written permission of the publisher. Whilst every effort is
made to ensure all information in the magazine is correct, prices and details may be subject to change.
All photographic material is copyright to the relevant owner and appears with their kind permission.
Visuals are used in a reviews context and no copyright infringement is intended. All rights reserved.

Starburst is printed in the UK by BUXTON PRESS LIMITED
Palace Road, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 6AE

Distributed by Marketforce (UK) Ltd, 2nd Floor, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU.
Tel: 020 3148 3300 - Fax: 020 3148 8105 - Web: marketforce.co.uk

STARBURST
PUBLISHING

STARBURST PUBLISHING

23 Nicholas Street,
Manchester M1 4EN
0161 228 2332

EDITORIAL

Ontogenesis. Now there's a grand word. And I don't mean what
you watch after **Star Trek: Next Gen** Season Seven, Ep 18 (go on,
look it up!). In fact, to steal an American TV cliché, it's so deep and
meaningful, I'm going to pause, then say it again. Ontogenesis.
Champion.

Dusty old dictionaries will tell you it means 'the development of
an individual organism or anatomical or behavioural feature from
the earliest stage to maturity'. But stuff that, language is a living
growing thing that only develops when we interfere.

I think we ALL have our own personal ontogeneses
(ontogenisi?). And it's kind of a sci-fi thing in itself. It's about
multiple universes; ones brimming with those **Doctor Who** 'Turn Left'
moments. And the results of turning right. Or going straight on. Or
even jacking the whole thing in and crawling back into bed.

Now let's add a new ingredient into our little Robochef mix...
predestiny. Or the route map to one's own optimum level as I like to
think of it. And the multiple choices you're constantly faced with that
can oh-so-easily take you off-piste

You can all play this game in the comfort of your own homes
but as I've been given this space to waffle on, you get stuck with
mine. Well, the key relevant 'Turn Left' moments in my professional
development from the earliest stages to second childhood, anyway.

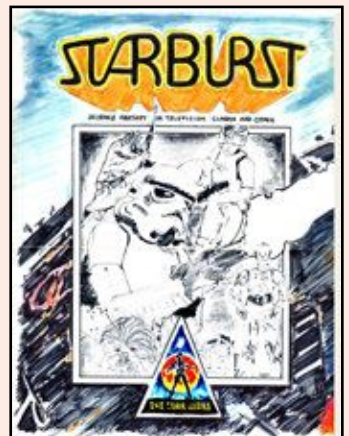
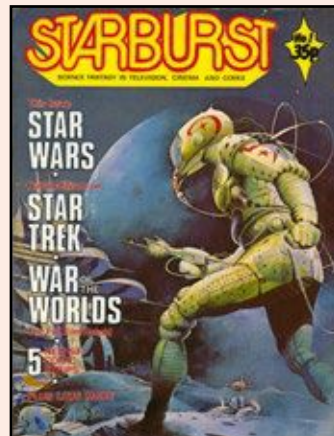
STARBURST (you knew I'd get to it) was my first professional
stab at publishing, some 40 years ago. Trade order totals were
72,000 copies. Which was nice.

Derinn Comicollector was my first amateur stab at publishing,
some 50 years ago. Mail order totals were 37 copies.
Now that's what I call development. Definitely took the correct
path there.

But **Derinn** (a truncation of my birth name, Derek Skinn)
Comicollector needed only a Gestetner hand-cranked desk
printer and a few pounds worth of foolscap paper. STARBURST
needed Liverpool Web Offset. And a few thousand pounds worth of
investment. Which I didn't have. I seriously never expected orders
to be more than a comfortable 25,000 or so. You see, I had no track
record with Liverpool Web Offset as an actual publisher. They knew
me as an employee of Warner Bros publishing arm, not a standalone
bona-fide top dog. So they wanted half the print bill paid up front.
As their production manager Paul McNamee so wittily put it, "We're
not in for a share of potential profits, so we don't want a share of
potential losses."

Not so much a Turn Left moment as a traffic pile up.
I could have crawled back into bed. I was on a decent salary
editing a raft of titles for Harry, Albert, Sam, and Jack Wonskolaser
(lucky, their Anglicised their Polish names, Wonskolaser Bros doesn't
have the same ring). But no, I was a driven soul; my passion fuelling
the flames. So, a bit of outside the box thinking was required. You
could call it a quantum leap except, despite the fabbo TV series,
quantum really means the smallest amount of something. So Sam
Beckett should really have budgeted about an eighth of an inch each
episode. Which wouldn't be the sexiest TV imaginable.

To keep this tortured metaphor going, I found a bypass; one
without which the world's longest-running cult magazine wouldn't
have got beyond the spike pile of unrealised dreams.



FEEDBACK

You can write to STARBURST via snail mail:
STARBURST MAGAZINE, PO Box 4508, Manchester, M61 0GY
 or email: letters@starburstmagazine.com

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR 40TH

Hi, Just felt I had to drop you a line to congratulate everyone at STARBURST on your upcoming 40th Anniversary.

I go back a long way with the magazine - I think my first issue was number 4 or 5 (it has Christopher Reeve as Superman on the cover anyway). I was hooked instantly. STARBURST meant quite a lot to me for a few years in my teens - it's where I learned my Cronenbergs from my Romeros and my Carpenters from my Argentos and I used to love reading John Brosnan's It's Only a Movie column. I was even at the *Blade Runner* preview in Shaftsbury Avenue in (?) 1982. Magical.

I drifted away for a time as you do but I'm back now and I love the new style mag and the podcast. I'm still as big a genre fan as ever and I'm lucky enough to have a partner who shares my passion.

Best wishes to all and maybe I'll run in to some of you at a convention sometime.

Cheers,

Dave Griffiths, via EMAIL

Thank you Dave! We hope you enjoy the trip down memory lane in this issue. And we don't look a day over 21, do we?

GROUNDHOG CINEMA

Hello STARBURST, This year alone I saw three movies in the cinema that took inspiration from *Groundhog Day*: *Before I Fall*, *2:22* and *Happy Death Day* (in the latter they actually mention *Groundhog Day*: "Your situation reminds me of the movie *Groundhog Day* with Bill Murray." "Never heard of it. Who's Bill Murray?"). In *2:22*, the main character doesn't actually relive the same day over and over, but he encounters recurring patterns at the exact same time and exact same place every day, but with different people. And when I saw *The Killing of a Sacred Deer* (recommended! Colin Farrell and Yorgos Lanthimos reunite after *The Lobster*), the characters watch a clip from the movie (pause for effect)... *Groundhog Day*! Quite eerie.

Maybe I'm also stuck in some sort of timeloop. Judging by the many remakes/sequels/prequels etc. this actually might be the case (cue spooky music). Maybe Mulder and Scully should look into it, together with Agent Cooper.

Speaking of sequels, I cannot wait for *The Last Jedi* to hit the screens and for Daisy Ridley to return, whoohoo! I would watch Ridley read from the phone book if they filmed it and released it theatrically. Anyway, I'm a fan of Ridley. I even have two Rey action figures! She would be a great female *Doctor Who* as well, muhahaha (evil laughter, because some people are sensitive about this subject!) Or a female James Bond (Jane Bond?).

Thor: Ragnarok was a lot of fun and the silly humour (more than usual) was probably influenced by *Guardians of the Galaxy*. Jeff Goldblum has the best line in the whole movie (something to do with Asgard, hehe). Btw: I was surprised to see two (!) of my letters published in STARBURST a couple of issues ago. I hope you didn't get complaints from other readers ;-).

I'll be back... with my top 5 or 10 for 2017 and I can already say *It and Terminator 2: Judgment Day 3D* will be in it. I didn't see *T2* when it originally came out (I was 12 in 1991, which is no excuse) and although I have seen it numerous times on TV and DVD since, it was fun to watch it on the silver screen. The 3D (with special T2-3D glasses) was also the best I've ever seen (and I'm not a fan of 3D).

I would like to end this letter by recommending the French movie *Ma Loute* (English title: *Slack Bay*, 2016). Completely batcrap crazy. The few people who attended the screening all left, except me, laughing through the whole movie. Even weirder than the weirdest done by Monty Python.

Cheers,

Kapreles 3D, via EMAIL

No one complains about your letters, Sir - least of all us! Don't miss next month's issue where we will run down our writers' top movies of the year!



"As a woman in Hollywood, this is nowhere near the creepiest thing she'd seen on set"

Winner: Paul Smith. Head over to www.starburstmagazine.com to enter this month's caption contest.



I'd already commissioned my *House of Hammer* team to write and illustrate 52 pages of content for the ever-important mock-up dummy, which turns your embryonic concept into a collection of Letraset and Pritt Stick pages that you can show a distributor to clinch the deal. But they were to be paid on publication. And that was suddenly in the fabled land of J. M. Barrie's lost boys.

Now you can call this next move audacious, or outrageous, or downright canny. But it was delivered with passionate sincerity... I asked the people to whom I already owed more than a few bob to lend me money so I could get their work printed.

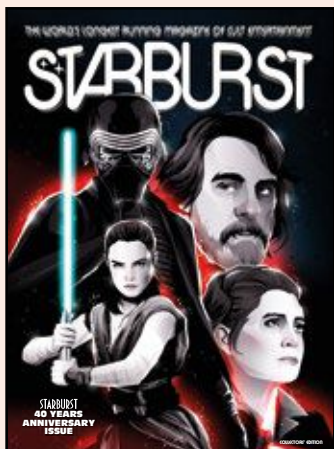
And they actually did. Tony Crawley, John Brosnan, Dave Gibbons, Alan McKenzie... the lot of them. They lent me the several grand I needed to oil the printing presses and get STARBURST Issue One out there. Maybe they should have taken shares in it instead, but it sold so well they got their money back within 30 days. And I even had enough left over to pay them for their work AND produce Issue Two. Which is nice.

In a rash moment at the end of my editorial for Issue One I said, "Stick with us. We intend to be around for a l-o-n-g time!"

And thanks to foster parent Jordan Royce and his dedicated team and you - the all-important reader - that foolhardy promise has been kept, probably entertaining and inspiring millions across the decades.

I know it's a different (and equally long-standing) title, but to repeat my sign-off from the first issue of another 1970s launch of mine, "Happy times and places".

DEZ SKINN
HONORARY EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



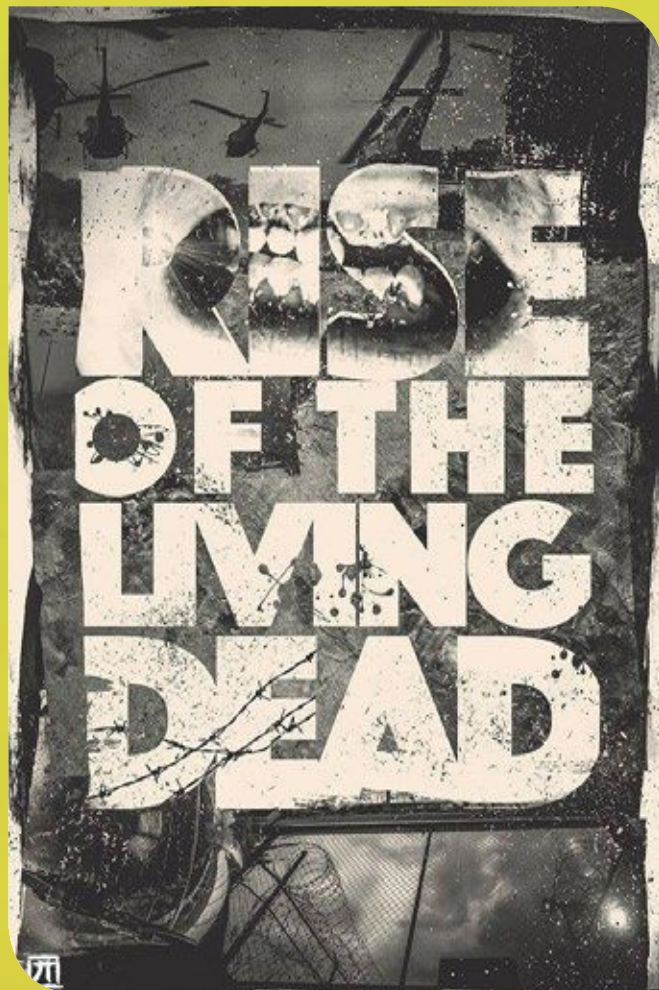
Buy directly from STARBURSTMAGAZINE.COM and choose from our **Collectors' Edition** cover or **Newsstand** cover.

STARBURST

NEXT ISSUE: 444 ON SALE FROM DECEMBER 15TH

THINGS TO COME

A ROUND-UP OF THE
BEST (AND WORST)
OF THIS MONTH'S
MOVIE / TV NEWS



Origin of the Dead

The late George A. Romero's son, George Cameron, has updated the world on his planned prequel to his father's 1968 masterpiece **Night of the Living Dead**. Originally entitled **Origins** when it was successfully funded via Indiegogo in 2014, now to be known as **Rise of the Living Dead**, the directing offspring revealed the title in a Facebook post recently.

"Many of you know that I have been working to tell a story for many years," Romero wrote, "My dad read the script and called it 'genius'. Many have approached me about making this film and I've said no to many because even though I'm not a 'precious' artist, this one is special... this one is mine... this one... is my love letter to my dad... to his work... to the fact that he was once called the most dangerous filmmaker alive... to the fact that society in 1968 wanted to shut him up as much as they wanted to celebrate him."

Continuing, he added: "This one is the prelude to **Night**, the film that created the pop culture phenomenon that has inspired thousands of filmmakers from backyard auteurs to \$180M features to the single longest running and most successful show in the history of television [sic - you sure?]. This one has been a long time coming. And it is my absolute promise to you all that this film will be everything it needs to be."

The film will answer the big question from Papa Romero's franchise: how did the zombie outbreak begin? There's no more info on when the film will go before cameras or be released, but

we were massively impressed with the younger Romero's earlier movie **Auteur** (2014), so we have high hopes that he'll do his father proud.

DC

One of the biggest comic book-driven movie news stories of this past month is that Warner Brothers has finally found the titular hero for David F. Sandberg's **Shazam!** After John Cena and Joshua Sasse were rumoured for the gig, it's now been confirmed that Zachary Levi will be playing the character previously known as Captain Marvel. As well as the likes of **Chuck** and **Tangled**, Levi will be best known to genre fans for playing Fandral in Marvel Studios' **Thor** pictures. For those unfamiliar with Shazam as a character, young Billy Batson can transform into the all-powerful superhero by uttering one single word: "Shazam!" For Billy, the studio has - as we're going to print - brought in Andi Mack's Asher Angel to play the youngster. But the casting of its dual heroes isn't the only **Shazam!** news this month, for the movie is also close to landing its 'big bad'. At this moment in time, Mark Strong is in talks to play the villainous Doctor Sivana - an evil scientist who was the main nemesis of the hero during the early days when he was known as Captain Marvel (y'know, before legal threats and lawsuits from Marvel Comics led to Captain Marvel being renamed as Shazam). Strong is no stranger to comic book-based roles, of course, having played Sinestro in **Green Lantern** and more recently taken on the role of Merlin in the Kingsman films. Despite **Lights Out** and **Annabelle: Creation**'s Sandberg being on board to direct, the early word is that **Shazam!** will have a light and fresh tone to it when it hits the big screen in April 2019.

For as long as **Shazam!** has been in development - which is a decade or more, by this point - Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson has been up for the Black Adam gig. Black Adam, aka Teth-Adam of Kahndaq, is the biggest villain in the world of the heroic Shazam, and Johnson was confirmed for that role several years ago now. In the past year or so, however, it was decided that Black Adam would not feature in **Shazam!**, and he would instead be given his own movie to make the most of Johnson's status as one of the most bankable box office names in the game right now. While no director has been announced for **Black Adam** yet, the picture has now brought in **Undateable**'s Adam Szykiel to pen the film's script. Despite having been in some form of development for an age now, it's still relatively early doors for **Black Adam**, so hopefully we'll start to see some further movement on the movie over the next few months.

When it comes to fan favourite comic book characters, one of the hottest names out there right now is Slade Wilson, aka Deathstroke. Following Manu Bennett's brilliant take on the famed villain-cum-antihero in **Arrow**, Slade has seen a huge boost in popularity - as highlighted by Joe Manganiello having been brought in to play the rogue in Matt Reeves' **The Batman**. And now, reports from this past month have a solo movie pegged for Deathstroke. But not just that, for Warners reportedly want Gareth Evans to direct the film. Yes, as in the same Gareth Evans who directed some of the finest brutal, all-action efforts of recent memory in the shape of **The Raid** and its sequel. There's nothing concrete on Evans' involvement as we go to print, but he'd be an absolutely inspired choice if you ask us. Seemingly titled simply **Deathstroke** right now, this solo outing for Manganiello's Slade has yet to be given an official release date, although Warners has a whole host of vacant dates reserved for their vast array of upcoming DC movies.

With the past few months having seen some of the core cast of the upcoming live-action Teen Titans show - **Titans** - coming together, the show has now found its Beast Boy. As the much-

loved Gar Logan character will be Ryan Potter, best known for voicing Hiro in **Big Hero 6**. For those unfamiliar with Beast Boy, he's a fun and fascinating young hero who has the ability to shapeshift in to the form of any animal. Already on board for **Titans** are Brenton Thwaites as Dick Grayson, Anna Diop as Starfire, Teagan Croft as Raven, Lindsey Gort as Detective Amy Rohrbach, and Alan Ritchson and Minka Kelly as the Hawk and Dove duo. **Titans** will premiere next year on Warner Brothers' new on-demand streaming service.

In one final piece of brief (fan pleasing!) DC news, it's been confirmed that Matt Ryan will reprise his John Constantine role for two episodes of **DC's Legends of Tomorrow** later in the show's now-started third season. Ryan, of course, headlined the sadly-canned **Constantine** series before he turned up in the Arrowverse for an episode of **Arrow**'s fourth season. Elsewhere, Ryan's Constantine has appeared in the animated **Justice League Dark** and will soon be getting his own CW Seed **Constantine** animated series. For his **Legends** appearance, that will feature uber-rookie Damien Darhk and has been dubbed "**The Exorcist meets One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest**" by showrunner Phil Klemmer. Remember that upcoming show that's set to focus on the adventures of Superman's grandpa? Y'know, the slightly-scraping-the-barrel **Krypton**? Well, while all has been a little quiet on that front over the past month or two, the new series has moved to bring in Blake Ritson as one of the biggest bad guys in the world of Superman and beyond. The **Da Vinci's Demons** actor has been brought in to play none other than the no-good, super-intelligent, all-conquering alien android, Brainiac! Of course, the classic Kryptonian saying compares Brainiacs to buses. And as such, **Supergirl** has followed suit and brought in its own Brainiac. Well, Brainiac 5, that is. To be played by **Defiance**'s Jesse Rath, Brainiac 5 is actually a heroic descendent of the standard (and totally evil!) Brainiac who originates from the far, far future. In **Supergirl**, the character will be a member of the famed Legion of Super-Heroes who arrives in National City to help out Melissa Benoist's titular Maid of Might in her battle against the villainous Reign. Rath's Brainiac 5 will debut in the tenth season of **Supergirl**'s current third season, and it looks as if the hero may well turn up in a few further episodes as the Legion get their time in the spotlight. As it happens, that same villain is pegged as responsible for Krypton's destruction in certain strands of DC continuity. Whether that is the case in **Krypton**, we'll have to wait and see. Additionally, **Ray Donovan**'s Paula Malcomson has been signed-up as Charys, the matriarch of the House of El and the mother of Seg-El. Seg-El, as played by The Halcyon's Cameron Cuffe, is the aforementioned grandpops of the Man of Steel, thus making Charys Superman's great grandmother. And yes, much like you, we're still not entirely sure if we really need a show focused on the Big Blue Boy Scout's granddad, and, if we're being perfectly honest, we're getting just a whiff of **Marvel's Inhumans** about the whole project - and we all know how that turned out! Still, we'll reserve judgement until **Krypton** explodes on to screens at a to-be-confirmed 2018 date. | AP

Marvel

In some potentially huge news, Disney is eyeing up a purchase of certain elements of 20th Century Fox - most notably Fox's movie studio and TV production company (FOX). Considering that the House of Mouse is the home of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, this could have pretty monumental ramifications for the MCU. Why's that? Well, that's due to Fox owning the cinematic rights to Marvel properties such as the X-Men and the Fantastic Four. In case we need to spell it out for you: that means that Xavier's mutants and Marvel's First Family could be brought into the MCU. In the X-Men's case, given their storied history so far, it would likely make sense to just continue with the key players of that X-world and incorporate them into the greater MCU. For the FF, though, after the troubles of Josh Trank's turd-tastic **Fantastic Four** movie of 2015, we wouldn't be surprised if a new cast was assembled if the Fantastic Four do indeed wind up in the MCU at some point down the line. Considering that the FF have been such a huge and pivotal part of the Marvel comic book world for some many decades, despite how wonderful the Marvel Cinematic Universe is, it still feels slightly lacking that Reed Richards, Sue Storm, Johnny Storm, and Ben Grimm aren't propping up the Yancy Street corner of the MCU. Talks between Disney and 20th Century Fox are believed to have been ongoing for several weeks, and this could be a game-changing deal for a whole variety of reasons; including how picking

A round-up of what not to miss this month on...

horrorchannel

NOVEMBER 28TH - IDLE HANDS (1999)

This is a fabulous cult comedy horror that sees a teenage stoner develop a possessed hand that goes on a killing spree. Seth Green (**Buffy the Vampire Slayer**) and Jessica Alba (**Dark Angel**) head the cast and Freddie Krueger himself Robert Englund provides the voice of the hand. Schlocky black comedy and undemanding thrills.

DECEMBER 11TH - NUDE NUNS WITH BIG GUNS (2010)

You'll probably know whether you'll enjoy this just from the title. If overly sexualised Nunsploration is your bag, fill your boots; if you're a delicate little snowflake, maybe you should look elsewhere. It's certainly a sleazy but fun revenge thriller in true grindhouse fashion.

DECEMBER 12TH - EXAM (2009)

An intriguingly claustrophobic thriller, this has a group of job candidates put through a rather bizarre exam for a mystery position at a prestigious firm. Frustration and competitiveness give way to in-fighting and violence as the eight individuals are slowly dismissed. Just be glad you don't have to put up with things like this in your next interview! Stars STARBURST favourite Pollyanna McIntosh (**The Walking Dead**) and Jimi Mistry (**It's a Wonderful Afterlife**).

DECEMBER 9TH - DAY OF THE DEAD (2008)

Following the success of Zack Snyder's remake of **Dawn of the Dead**, it was only natural someone would want to keep digging the zombies up. This isn't connected to that re-do (despite having Ving Rhames return - he's a completely different character here) and is only loosely based on George A. Romero's original 1985 film. Also stars **American Beauty**'s Mena Suvari. Unlike Romero's films, we have a reason people are becoming flesh-eaters, but don't let that put you off.

DECEMBER 12TH - THE CURSE OF THE MUMMY'S TOMB (1964)

A lesser-known (for good reason) Hammer production, this colourful but dusty sequel has none of the usual characters we come to expect from the studio (except the ever-welcome appearance of Michael Ripper), which probably accounts for a lot of its obscurity.

DECEMBER 16TH - DON'T BLINK (2015)

Mena Suvari appears once more, this time forced to stay at an abandoned mountain resort with her group. Something's gone on there and they have no petrol to get home. Will they survive? Watch and find out!

Horror Channel is still the home of **Star Trek**, with episodes from **The Original Series** and **Voyager** screening all month. It's also worth looking out for a pair of water-based mini-series from the creator of **Jaws**. **The Beast** - starring **CSI**'s William Petersen - sees a giant squid killing people when its food supply dries up and **Creature** has Craig T. Nelson and Kim Cattrall in an abandoned secret military base that comes under attack from an amphibious monster. Both are based on books by Peter Benchley, who clearly wanted to keep up the tradition of his blockbusting novel.

Horror Channel is available on SKY 319, Virgin 149, Freeview 70, Freesat 138 and TalkTalk 487.

up the FOX TV output - including shows such as **The Simpsons**, **Family Guy**, **The X-Files**, **The Exorcist**, **Gotham** and a whole slew of others currently airing or formerly produced by the network - could help Disney's upcoming on-demand streaming service compete with Netflix and Amazon Prime. As mentioned, this is all in the early stages right now, but this is one of those stories that you most definitely need to keep your eyes on. And fear not, for we'll bring you more on this here in TTC and over at starburstmagazine.com if and when things develop further.

While the Guardians of the Galaxy and Earth's Mightiest Heroes will be coming together to fight the good fight in **Infinity War**, a new hero who'll be joining the action is Brie Larson's Captain Marvel. Following her debut in that May 2018 release, Carol

POSTER MORTÉM



Based on the Neil Gaiman short story of the same name, **How to Talk to Girls at Parties** could well be the cult breakout of the first half of the 2018. Directed by John Cameron Mitchell, who brought us the musical **Hedwig and the Angry Inch** and the boundary-pushing and controversial **Shortbus**, it's set at the height of the punk rock explosion of the seventies, and stars Elle Fanning as an alien who is allowed to hang out with a love-struck teen (Alex Sharp) for 48 hours to learn about humans and 'the punk'. Nicole Kidman, meanwhile, gets dolled up as the manager of a band and is virtually unrecognisable. The movie hits the UK on May 11th.

Danvers will get her own **Captain Marvel** film in 2019. On that front, Ben Mendelsohn is in talks to play the villain of the piece. Mendelsohn will be familiar for his turn as Orson Krennic in **Rogue One: A Star Wars Story**, but more important here is that he's worked with **Captain Marvel** directors Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck on **Mississippi Grind**. At this stage, the current word is that Mendelsohn's role in **Captain Marvel** would be that of the leader of the nefarious alien Skrulls. **Captain Marvel** will hit the silver screen on March 8th, 2019, either side of Larson's Danvers appearing in **Avengers: Infinity War** and its 2019 sequel.

Sticking (kind of) with Captain Marvel, **Thor: Ragnarok** star Tessa Thompson has revealed that some of the women of the Marvel Cinematic Universe have got together to pitch an all-female picture to the powers that be. Thompson explained that she was joined by Brie Larson, Scarlett Johansson (Black Widow), Karen Gillan (Nebula), and Pom Klementieff (Mantis) in approaching Marvel Studios' Kevin Feige about doing a movie centred on the ladies of the MCU. While nothing even remotely concrete has come of this yet, Thompson did add that Feige had a "general interest" in just such a film happening at some point in this shared cinematic realm - so who knows what could come of this?

With filming having now commenced on Sony Pictures' Tom Hardy-headlined **Venom**, the movie has brought in two more new faces during this past month. Both **Veep**'s Reid Scott and **Midnight Special**'s Scott Haze have joined the picture in unknown roles, which sees them added to a cast that currently includes Hardy, Michelle Williams, Riz Ahmed, and Jenny Slate. The current word is that **Venom** will pull inspiration from the **Venom: Lethal Protector** comic book arc, in which Eddie Brock, pegged more as an

antihero at this point, finds himself battling five other symbiotes; Scream, Phage, Riot, Lasher, and Agony. Given that Carnage and Bride of Venom are also believed to feature in the film, if **Lethal Protector** is faithfully adapted then that would wrack the symbiote count up to a whopping eight for **Venom**. Given how Sony handled **The Amazing Spider-Man 2**, we wouldn't put it past them to throw so many characters at the screen to see what sticks, but if you ask us, we'd imagine only certain elements of the **Lethal Protector** arc will be adapted for Hardy's big screen outing as Brock. With **Zombieland**'s Ruben Fleischer on directing duties, **Venom** is currently booked in for October 2018. As well as that symbiote-heavy affair, Sony currently has a Silver Sable and Black team-up movie - dubbed **Silver and Black** - in development, as well as plans to give both Mystério and Kraven the Hunter their own solo films as they continue to flesh out their Spidey-less Spider-Verse.

In the land of 20th Century Fox's Marvel properties, it looks like there could be some sort of movement in the aftermath of the mesmerising **Logan**. Director James Mangold has gone on record to say that he's "just working on a script" for a spin-off picture for Dafne Keen's Laura, aka X-23. Mangold has cited Patty Jenkins' **Wonder Woman** as proving to studios that audiences are now more open than ever to a movie driven by a strong female protagonist. This is all extremely early days for an X-23 movie, as Mangold stressed, but there's definitely some loose plans in mind to give Laura her own film. Additionally, Hugh Jackman has once more stressed that he is done with all things Wolverine and that he wouldn't have any involvement in an X-23 effort.

To many of you, **Marvel's Daredevil** will be seen as the cream of the crop (Randy Savage represent!) when it comes to Marvel's Netflix-exclusive shows. While Charlie Cox has wowed as the titular Guardian Devil, equally as charming and terrifying has been Vincent D'Onofrio as Wilson Fisk, aka the Kingpin. So, you'll likely all be ecstatic to hear that D'Onofrio's Fisk has been confirmed to return as a main character for **Marvel's Daredevil**'s upcoming third season. Having had a huge part to play in the show's debut season, Kingpin was restricted to a supporting role in the series' second year. Production on this new season is due to start imminently ahead of arriving on the on-demand streaming service at a to-be-confirmed 2018 date.

One of the most hotly anticipated shows of next year is **Marvel's New Warriors**. With that half-hour comedy series announced as airing on the Freeform network in the US, plans have now changed. Due to Freeform's schedule being so stacked, they've been unable to find a slot for the show. As such, Marvel Entertainment has taken the series back as they look to find a new home for it. Fear not, though, for this isn't an indication of the expected quality of **New Warriors**. In fact, screenings of the pilot episode have been majorly well received by everyone who has seen it. Right now, on-demand streaming services such as Netflix and Hulu are being tossed around as the likely destination for the series in North America. Of course, it's still way too early for the show to have a UK home announced, but hopefully we'll hear more on that as 2018 looms ever closer. Plot-wise, **Marvel's New Warriors** will focus on six youngsters - Milana Vayntrub's Squirrel Girl, Derek Theler's Mister Immortal, Jeremy Tardy's Night Thrasher, Calum Worthy's Speedball, Matthew Moy's Microbe, and Kate Comer's Debrii - with special abilities that they are all starting to come to terms with while also trying to live the lives of regular teenagers. | AP

AND FINALLY...

In the wake of the Harvey Weinstein scandal, Lars Klevberg's feature-length version of his hit short **Polaroid** has been bumped from its planned Thanksgiving weekend release to an undisclosed 2018 slot. No doubt this is so Dimension Films and the company that bears the disgraced producer's name can rebrand and relaunch to sever their ties completely.

It's already one of the most anticipated films of the coming year, but Jon (**National Treasure**) Turteltaub's adaptation of Steve Alten's giant shark novel **Meg** has had a title tweak. For some reason, it'll now be known as **The Meg**. Word has it that the US Ratings board the MPAA has passed the film as a PG-13. This will probably mean they'll be less gory action than expected when the film opens on August 10th, 2018.

TTC 443 was written by Martin Unsworth and Andrew Pollard.
Edited by Martin Unsworth.



SUBSCRIBE TO STARBURST TODAY

SAVE MONEY and choose from
Collectors or Newsstand covers

WWW.STARBURSTMAGAZINE.COM/SUBSCRIBE

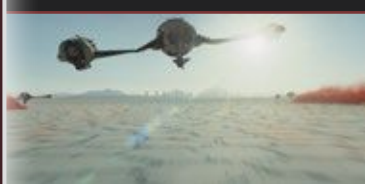
Digital edition and back
issues also available

December 14th brings the eighth big screen *Star Wars* film (well, the eleventh if you count 1984's *Caravan of Courage*, 2008's animated *Clone Wars* movie and the first standalone entry *Rogue One*) to the big screen in the form of *The Last Jedi*. After the release of the second trailer, anticipation is high, as the answers fans have longed for since late 2015 and the release of *The Force Awakens* crawl ever nearer.

As always in the realm of *Star Wars* fandom, rumour, hypothesis, speculation, and spoilers run rampant. Fans have followed the apparently smooth making of Episode Eight with interest as other *Star Wars* projects have been beset with directorial issues. The removal of Chris Lord and Phil Miller from next May's Han Solo standalone (ingeniously entitled *Solo*), the stepping in of Tony Gilroy to reshoot much of *Rogue One*, and the sacking before production even began of Josh Trank on the Boba Fett film didn't cover the San Francisco-based company in glory. However, production seems to have run far more smoothly under the stewardship of director Rian Johnson and as such many were surprised that the removal of director Colin Trevorrow from 2019's Episode Nine saw *The Force Awakens* director J. J. Abrams and his production company Bad Robot return instead of Johnson to finish off the trilogy.

That said, a smooth production doesn't guarantee a blockbuster film. Anticipation is high, with views for *The Last Jedi* trailer only a few million behind that of *The Force Awakens* two years ago. While there is a constant torrent of content coming from Lucasfilm and Disney in the form of comics, novels, short-form animated series, LEGO spin-offs, magazines and enough product to fill the docking bays of the Supremacy, fandom appears to be coping with the deluge and as such the world is ready to dive back into the story of Rey, Finn, Poe and company.

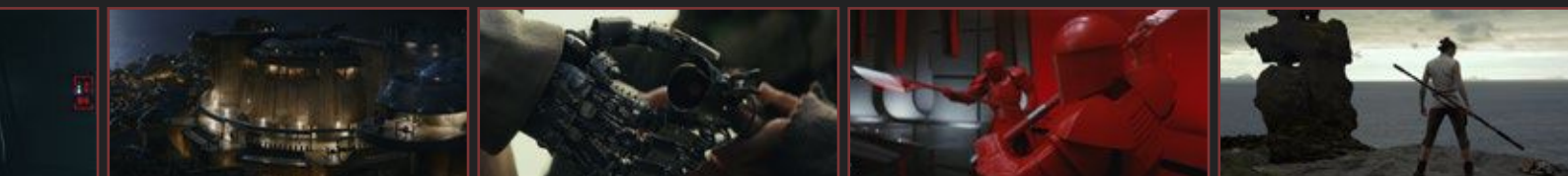
The eyes of the world are also trained on the film as it marks the final appearance of Carrie Fisher as General Leia Organa. How have Johnson, Lucasfilm, and Disney dealt with the unexpected passing of the first lady of *Star Wars*? It has been, and continues to be, a tricky and sensitive subject. Does the evolution and resolution of the character of Leia supersede the real-world passing of Fisher, or are the



KEEPING THE BALANCE

by Mark Newbold

It's time to venture once more to a galaxy far, far away for the latest in the STAR WARS saga.
What can we expect from THE LAST JEDI?





two women too closely linked? Some believe a recasting is in order to continue Leia's story, and Lucasfilm quickly made clear their promise not to do a CGI Leia as they had in the final scene of last year's *Rogue One*. The trailer cleverly cut moments from across the two-and-a-half-hour-long film to give the impression that certain characters were interacting with each other, but perhaps Johnson filmed enough that there's ample footage to bring Leia's story to a close... or

there's a way forward to have her in the ninth episode somehow.

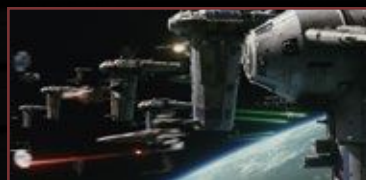
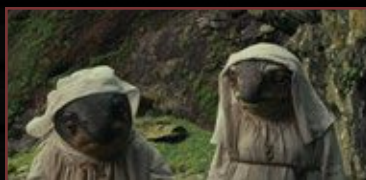
As fans, we make so many assumptions. A recent conversation with *Star Wars* vintage collector and fan Grant Criddle raised a theory that quite literally stopped this writer in his tracks, as it's one that no one has - to my knowledge anyway - raised thus far. One of the most intense scenes in *The Force Awakens* shows Rey (Daisy Ridley) having her flashbacks in the lower levels of Maz Kanata's castle after touching Luke Skywalker's (Mark Hamill) long-lost lightsaber. She sees a number of visions. The corridor on Bespin where Luke fought his father Darth Vader, and then a broken Skywalker placing his hand on the dome of R2-D2. Popular opinion states that it's Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) who destroys the Jedi Academy, hence his appearance with the Knights of Ren as they slay the last of a field full of dead bodies. *The Last Jedi* teaser shows us Rey's incredible power as the very ground cracks under her feet as she dips into the Force, and a worried Luke looks on. What if it's not Kylo who destroyed the temple, but Rey? Unwittingly, as a child, using the Force to such great effect that she goes Akira and destroys the school entirely. What if Kylo was defending the school? The scene of him in his mask

could easily be unconnected to the moment.

Luke Skywalker is the focal legacy character of *The Last Jedi*, as Han Solo was in *The Force Awakens* and Leia would have been in Episode Nine. However, the specific reasons for his long isolation on Ahch-To remain a mystery. As the (we assume) last Jedi of the film's title, he alone holds the secrets of the Jedi Order. However his academy was destroyed - be it by Kylo, Rey, Snoke (Andy Serkis) or someone else - that appears to have broken his spirit, and isolation became the most logical option in a galaxy intent on learning his secrets and perverting them for the dark side. Or is it the dark side? There's no indication that Snoke or Kylo are Sith, as Vader and Palpatine were before them. The First Order certainly bears much of the iconography of the Empire, but how Snoke and Kylo operate is still a mystery. *The Last Jedi* could reveal much of that process.

Kylo Ren will certainly be a huge part of the film, as his own uncertain journey continues. *The Force Awakens* saw the murder of his father, in an effort to fully commit to the darkness. With the new film starting where *The Force Awakens* left off, what mood will we find Kylo in? Will his focus remain, or will his fight with Rey have changed his perspective? Kylo is being trained to be the right hand of





Snoke, and suddenly this girl appears out of nowhere and bests him in combat, seemingly only a few short days after being discovered on Jakku. Is Kylo aware of who she is? Is there a way back for him, or has his patricide pushed him too far into the darkness?

Other characters are sure to play an important role in the path of the film. Finn, as played by John Boyega, ended *The Force Awakens* in a medically induced coma, slashed up the spine by the blade of Kylo Ren. He had already shown a willingness to escape from the ravages of war while on Takodana and head for the Outer Rim. Will his near-death experience enhance that desire to escape for a quiet life, or light a fire under him to help destroy the First Order? The second trailer certainly shows him in action fighting Captain Phasma (Gwendoline Christie), another character who has unfinished business in the middle chapter of the trilogy.

Phasma got short shrift in the first film, a handful of inconsequential lines and a Wookiee-fuelled sucker punch that saw her tossed in a trash compactor on the ill-fated Starkiller Base. High-ranking and important to the military effort, Phasma will surely receive a more satisfying portion of the action, as will Poe Dameron (Oscar Isaac). His character, originally destined to die in *The Force*

Awakens, appears to have forged a close bond with General Organa and now far more than being the Wedge Antilles for a new generation, Poe could step up into a more significant role as a man of the people, a rousing presence for the Resistance to get behind and a hero of the Battle of Starkiller Base.

You can't talk about *The Last Jedi* without talking about the puffin-sized characters who seem to have taken fandom by storm. The Porgs populate the islands of Ahch-To and, as we've seen, are destined to do 'Star Wars cute' much like the Ewoks did in the original trilogy and Hoojibs did in the classic Marvel run of the '70s and '80s. Indeed, we even see one in the cockpit of the Millennium Falcon, roaring alongside Chewbacca as the Falcon dives into the battle against the First Order on the mineral world of Crait. Some fans will love them, some hate them, but there's little doubt that such characters have a place in the saga. For every Palpatine or Fett, there needs to be a Binks or Jaxxon.

The film will also see the trilogy's big bad, Supreme Leader Snoke, appear in person instead of as a giant hologram reminiscent of Oz the Great and Powerful. Believed to be a mixture of on-set puppetry and CGI, the trailer certainly seems to suggest that, unlike in mid-trilogy entries *The Empire Strikes*

Back and *Attack of the Clones*, our primary puppet-master villain will make a personal appearance in the midst of the action. Can Snoke rock the boat even more, destabilising the already fragile relationships that exist between our major players? And beyond that, with the New Republic fleet destroyed during the attack on Hosnian Prime by missiles launched through hyperspace from Starkiller Base, can General Organa rally the surviving threads of the Republic, weave them into the





existing armies of the Resistance and cobble together a fleet with a chance of taking on the ever-growing forces of the First Order?

John Williams returns to score his eighth saga episode after Michael Giacchino did such a sterling job on *Rogue One*. As much as any element of these movies, fans salivate at the thought of new Williams music. *The Force Awakens* gave us some magical Williams moments, predominantly Rey's Theme.

Indeed, it was the desire to see through the musical journey of Rey that prompted Williams to complete this nine-episode trilogy or trilogies, but her theme isn't the only ones fans are keen to hear this time around. The prominence of Luke Skywalker will surely be the backbone of the score, as well as *Princess Leia's Theme*. Anyone who was fortunate enough to be in the crowd back in April at *Star Wars Celebration*, when Williams conducted *Princess Leia's Theme* to a stunned audience, will know the power of her music. Intensified, now that Carrie is no longer with us.

So, anticipation mounts. The wait for the film brings more questions, especially as eyes look ahead not only to *Solo: A Star Wars Story* in May 2018 but also to Episode IX in December 2019. Easy comparisons are being made to *The Empire Strikes Back*, the classic dark mid-trilogy episode that seems to have become the template for all trilogies (*Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, *Back to the Future 2*, etc.). We have walkers in the form of the monolithic AT-M6. We have a Super Star Destroyer, the 60km-wide Supremacy, which is set to steamroller out of the Unknown Regions where the First Order has been amassing their troops. *Empire* gave us a wise old Jedi Master in the form of Yoda, and *The Last Jedi* focuses

on Luke Skywalker, coming full circle from student to master. *The Last Jedi* also brings us Rose, a character believed to be less than on-the-level who works closely with Finn, who could be easily swayed. *Empire* had the elegance of Bespin, *The Last Jedi* the opulence of casino planet Cantonica and the city of Canto Bight. Swap out the white snowfields of Hoth for the white mineral deposits of Crait, where the remnants of an old rebel base, established before the start of the Galactic Civil War at the Battle of Scarif, lies vacant.

On the face of it, plenty of cosmetic comparisons, but thematically it seems that *The Last Jedi* will bear little resemblance to *The Empire Strikes Back*. The big questions must be: does Luke have the skill and the knowledge to train Rey, and will Rey be receptive to that training? Will we learn of her heritage? The trailer hints at a partnership between Kylo and Rey, the offering of a hand as seen between Vader and Luke in *Empire*. The 'truly special' power Snoke speaks of - does that belong to Rey, Kylo, Luke, or Leia? And most important of all, do Porgs taste better grilled, baked or fricasseed?

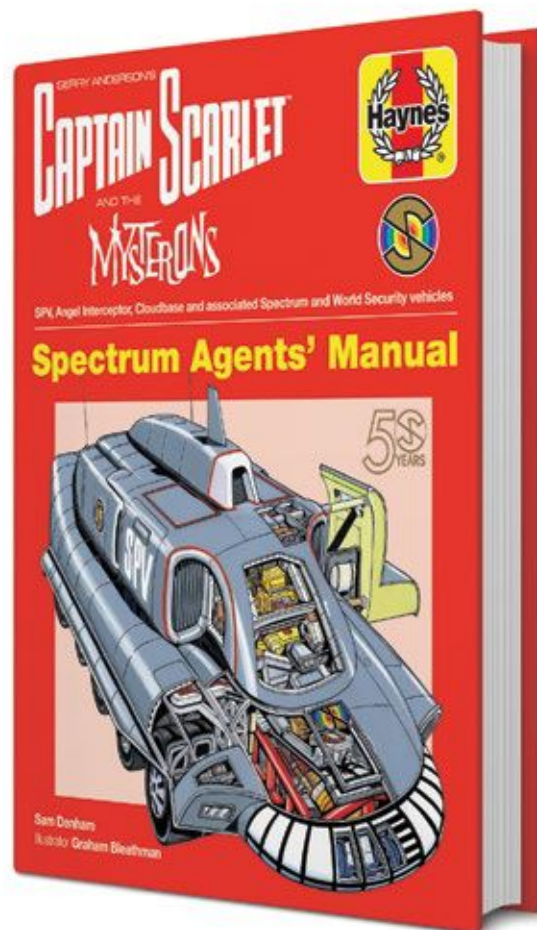
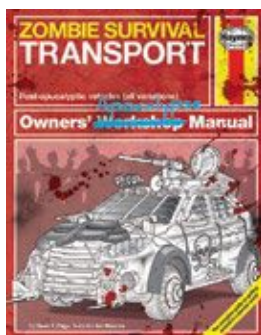
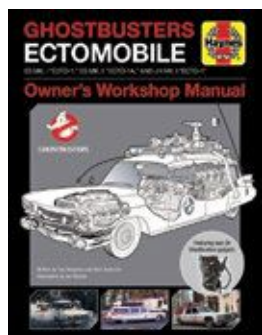
THE LAST JEDI hits UK screens on December 14th.



"GREAT BOOK AND
WOULD MAKE A
FANTASTIC CHRISTMAS
PRESENT FOR ANY
CAPTAIN SCARLET FAN."



AMAZON.CO.UK CUSTOMER REVIEW



  WWW.HAYNES.COM AVAILABLE FROM ALL GOOD BOOK SHOPS

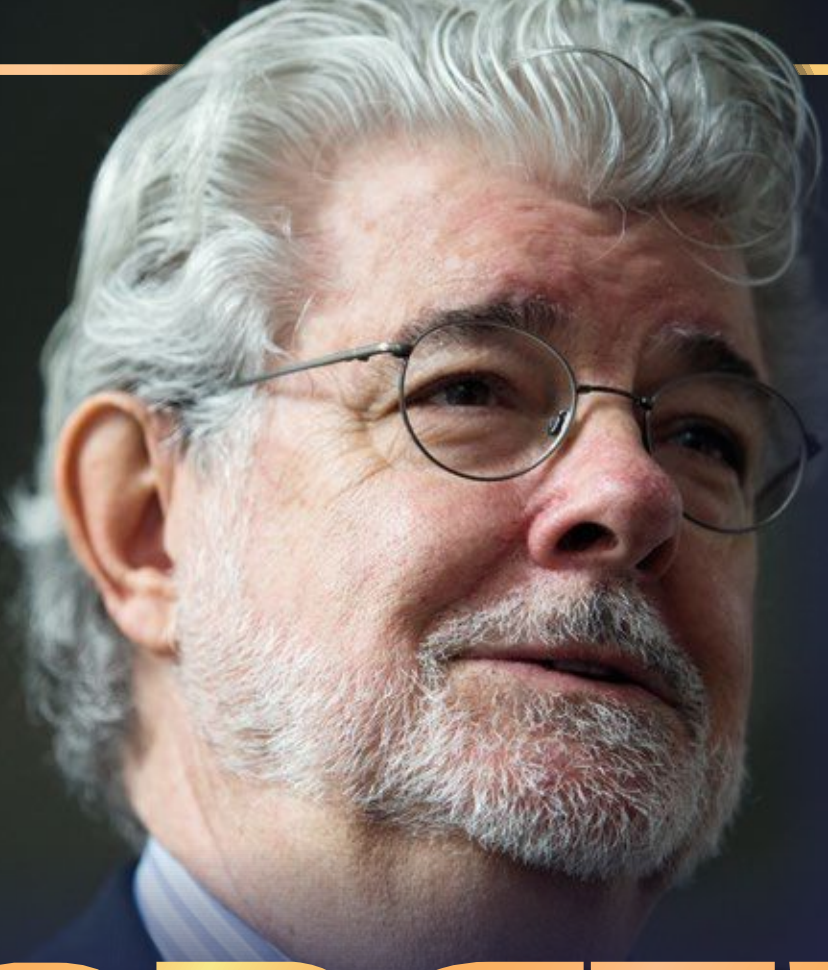


ACROSS THE WORLD

www.fabradiointernational.com

24 HRS A DAY

As we venture to a galaxy far, far away once more, we celebrate the genius of **GEORGE LUCAS**, who not only kick-started a franchise but changed cinema forever with numerous innovations and hours of entertainment...



BY GEORGE!

BY LUKE SPAFFORD

Storyteller, visionary, legendary filmmaker, 'the Raper of Childhoods'. Let's park that last epithet and come back to it later. George Lucas' contribution to filmmaking, visual effects, and sound is beyond hyperbole. Lucas' influence on all of us is beyond even that. Read on and you will find no Prequel-bashing, no hate for the special editions and no 'selling his soul' to the house of mouse. Praise the George! Lucas would start small and arthouse and end wishing to do the same. But in the meantime, he would produce arguably the greatest film in cinema - *Howard the Duck*. Saturday afternoons spent at the local picture house watching reruns of *Flash Gordon* seeded the spark of what would later become his greatest triumph. But it was the influence of Truffaut, Godard and the French New Wave that ignited the filmmaker in him. Nowhere is it more apparent than with *THX 1138*, his first full-length feature. Adapted from an earlier short film he had made as a student, the movie's stark whites and piercing sound - along with stylistic editing choices - evoke the spirit of the New Wave. If *THX 1138* has somehow passed you by, stop reading, go watch it and come back.

It was his second feature *American Graffiti* that caught the attention of the suits, or rather the hefty box office take, allowing Lucas to flee their greasy mitts. Demanding full control over his next venture, Lucas took on the mantle of indie auteur only to bring in one of the most commercially successful films of all time, 'the Wars'. This, in turn, would lead to a career-defining high when the film went on to grace the cover of the very first issue of this fine, fine magazine.

What Lucas gave to us fanboys and fangirls (fan folk?) is unprecedented in its effect on pop culture. Alongside the likes of The Beatles and Warhol, *Star Wars* IS pop culture. Every generation since has found its own *Star Wars*, be it the OT, the prequels, the animated series, or the sequels. Haters of the Special Editions note - they were this writer's generation and he couldn't give two shades of a womp rat's shit who shot first. Now even the Ewoks blink! Why wouldn't they?

While we are here, let's talk about that self-entitled elephant in the room. *Star Wars*, while beloved by millions, is not

their baby. Lucas created it, nurtured it and brought it to the world. If he wants to go back and tinker with it to make his art the finest that it can be, then let him. The greatest artists in the world will paint hundreds of versions of the same image before settling on the best. We all know that even with the huge advances Lucas' team at Industrial Light and Magic (ILM) made in effects work, they were never going to match the images in George's head. That's not to do ILM down; what they started then defines the look of modern effects today. Let it go. The Special Editions and the Blu-ray changes make *Star Wars* look and sound better. They just do. Did you hate the Jabba the Hutt scene in *A New Hope* so much that you stopped watching it? No, you didn't. So stop bitching and thank the maker!

George had created his own galaxy, a galaxy that fans wanted to live in, in the same way that it was lived in. These were films that gave us a feeling of the real in the fantasy; space ships looked like a battered Ford Cortina, cantinas were like your local boozer and your dog was now your co-pilot. Luke, Han, and Leia were you



and your friends, the school playground hummed with the sound of lightsabers. It was as ubiquitous as 'Exterminate'. How did George top the greatest movie ever made? He made the greatest movie ever made. Although he eschewed the director's chair for one Mr Irvin Kershner, our boy George knocked it clean out of the park with *The Empire Strikes Back* and dealt the moviegoing public the original, and still un-topped, WTF moment. Vader's outstretched hand and oft-imitated "I am your father" would have us eventually thinking, 'George, you are the Daddy!' Lucas added a darkness to the film that the Holy Nolan could only dream of. *The Empire Strikes Back* is always up there in the opinion polls of favourite movies alongside the likes of *Citizen Kane* and *The Shawshank Redemption*. Think about that. A rare sequel that is better than the original. Not only did Lucas mix up a magical potion with the original, he took those ingredients, added a little seasoning and did it again. And then he did it again.

Return of the Jedi topped the box office and cemented *Star Wars* as a franchise. This was decades before studio bods even

knew what a franchise was, and with the merchandising rights all his own, Lucas was creaming in a pretty penny. Pennies that, when the time came to sell, were spent on the US school system. So, let's add philanthropist to the list of George's achievements. *Return of the Jedi* continues down that dark path set by the previous instalment and gives us a Luke in the baddest of badass forms. Here is our farm boy imbued with mystical gifts, strolling in to a despot's palace and kicking ass. This could be you, an ordinary kid finding out they were utterly unique and taking down the school bully, or just pushing pencils across the desk with your mind. The only thing Lucas did to your childhood was enliven it and teach you that when all else fails, hope prevails.

In the early seventies, Lucas had a script titled *The Adventures of Indiana Smith*. Once again hoping to evoke the serials of the fifties, George envisioned a dashing, grizzled adventurer in the form of those whom had scaled the heights of Everest and discovered Tutankhamun's tomb. Some years later, whilst waiting for the backlash he was sure his little 'space flick'

would garner, Lucas was holidaying with his old pal Steven Spielberg in Maui. Talk turned to that of Mr Smith, and Doctor Jones was born.

That Lucas could envision a world-bestrident colossus like *Star Wars* and then pen the scripts for another franchise that would capture audiences is astounding. Remember that next time someone is pulling out the old diatribe that his dialogue is terrible. He wrote *Star Wars* AND he wrote *Indiana Jones*.

Raiders of the Lost Ark was the top grossing film of 1981 and was nominated for eight Oscars; at this point, Lucas was becoming greater than he could ever imagine. Three films followed; a prequel, a sequel and a further sequel that is much maligned by critics. So let's set our gaze on *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*. How could he survive a nuclear bomb in a fridge? Because it's fun and not the real world. Why are those gophers so ropey looking? Because a film has a limited budget. Why are there aliens in *Indiana Jones*? Because in the same universe they found the Ark of the

Five Films That Wouldn't Exist Without George Lucas



Star Trek: The Motion Picture

Star Trek was dead in the water, the studio bods saw the success of *Star Wars* and wanted to recreate it.



Avatar

Jar Jar Binks gave birth to the blue-skinned warriors; without him, they simply wouldn't exist.



Blade Runner

Want the origins of a lived-in universe? Look no further than *Star Wars*.



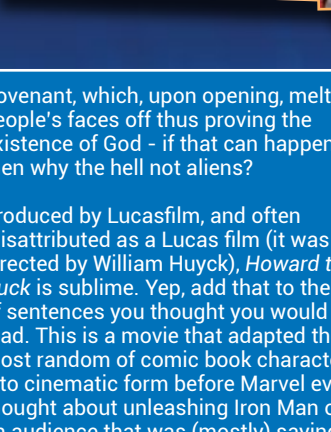
Jurassic Park

Lucas founded ILM, destined to create *Jurassic Park*'s dinosaurs; after seeing this, Lucas knew that ILM were ready to realise his vision for the Prequels.



WALL-E

R2-D2 stole our hearts; *WALL-E* took it to the next level.



Covenant, which, upon opening, melted people's faces off thus proving the existence of God - if that can happen, then why the hell not aliens?

Produced by Lucasfilm, and often misattributed as a Lucas film (it was directed by William Huyck), *Howard the Duck* is sublime. Yep, add that to the list of sentences you thought you would never read. This is a movie that adapted the most random of comic book characters into cinematic form before Marvel even thought about unleashing Iron Man on an audience that was (mostly) saying, "who?" *Howard the Duck* is funny, it really is. The story is simple but engaging. The cast are, in the very least, serviceable and Howard himself is perfectly realised. Go and watch it again remembering that if studios didn't take chances like this then you wouldn't have the likes of *Guardians of the Galaxy* gracing the screen.

Next on our whistle stop tour of Lucas wonderments is the positively delightful

Willow. Storied and produced by Lucas, *Willow* was conceived by George in that rather fertile period of the early seventies, but brought to fruition in the late eighties and helmed by friend Ron Howard. *Willow* retains the stature of classic eighties kids' movies, up there with the likes of *The Goonies*, *Labyrinth* and *The NeverEnding Story*. Another case of Lucas pushing the envelope of digital effects, the film features a very early example of morphing, an effect that would later be embodied by something only slightly less scary than Lord Vader: the T-1000.

OK. Let's do it. Let's hit them headlong. That most divisive of trilogies. Even saying the words 'the Prequels' is enough to induce apoplexy amongst those who forget that, on the whole, Lucas makes movies for kids.

While you may tire of the talk of trade agreements and policy, remember that pod racer scene? Remember that showdown with Darth Maul? Remember



You there - at the back. Yes, you, shouting, "*Jar Jar Binks!*" Shut up and sit down. Mr Binks is the reason we have the Hulk, along with the entirety of Andy Serkis' back catalogue. Lucas' work on motion capture technology is why we now have calls to add performance capture to the roster of Oscar awards. The Prequels are as engaging and masterful as the Original Trilogy. Those who grew up on the OT may disagree, but their influence on cinematic storytelling reaches far and wide. That they contain a story of such epic scope and yet still retain a humanity to their characters cannot have gone unnoticed by Peter Jackson when prepping his lauded *Rings* trilogy. The Prequels turn

Lucas' influence on cinema is immense. His influence on our culture is even greater. *Star Wars* was never a boy's film or a girl's film. It was both. Everyone had a hero they could aspire to be. When asked

Parodies reflecting Lucas' various works abound in pop culture and his dialogue has seeped into everyday parlance. We watch his films over and over again. The fan community pore over texts looking for titbits of information to try and make further sense of the worlds, yes, worlds that he has created. His films changed the landscape of cinema by taking what had come before and redefining everything that came after. Anyone who tries to tell you they haven't heard of *Star Wars* is a lying hipster - it's just simply not possible. Even your Gran loves *Star Wars*. In pushing the boundaries in everything he tried to do, George Lucas taught us the most important thing: *Try not. Do or do not. There is no try.*

Thank the Maker, indeed.



A NEW HOPE

WHILE WE'RE CURRENTLY CELEBRATING OUR 40TH ANNIVERSARY, TRUE BELIEVERS, THERE WAS A TIME WHEN STARBURST MAGAZINE WAS IN SO MUCH TROUBLE THAT WE WENT COMPLETELY OUT OF PRINT. DURING THOSE DARK DAYS, CURRENT EDITOR MIKE ROYCE PICKED UP THE MAG, DUSTED IT DOWN, AND DID HIS DAMNEDEST TO GET STARBURST BACK TO WHERE IT BELONGED. TO HELP OUT WITH THIS RELAUNCH AND OVERHAUL, HE GOT ON THE BATPHONE (OR AT LEAST THAT'S HOW I LIKE TO IMAGINE IT) AND BROUGHT IN KRIS HEYS AS HIS ASSISTANT EDITOR. THE PAIR DOING THEIR BEST TO GET YOUR FAVOURITE PUBLICATION BACK ON ITS PERCH. AND SO, IT'S TASKED WITH ME, YOUR HUMBLE ONLINE EDITOR-CUM-LEAD WRITER-CUM-WHISKY SUPPER TO SIT DOWN WITH MIKE AND KRIS TO GRILL THEM ABOUT GETTING STARBURST BACK ON ITS FEET, WHAT HAD GONE SO WRONG IN THE FIRST PLACE, RECONNECTING WITH OUR LONG-TIME FAN BASE AND A WHOLE LOT MORE. GRAB YOUR FAVOURITE TIPPLE, PARK UP IN YOUR COSY CHAIR, AND PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THE BRUTALLY HONEST YET UTTERLY FASCINATING STORY OF HOW STARBURST WAS BROUGHT BACK FROM THE BRINK IN 2011 AND HAS CONTINUED TO GO FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH EVER SINCE.

Words: Andrew Pollard

STARBURST: Right, first thing's first, back to the beginning. When and how did you two first discover STARBURST Magazine, and how pivotal would you say the publication was in shaping your tastes in taking a sci-fi, fantasy, and horror direction?

Mike Royce: I saw Issue #1 in Kennie's Newsagents in Offerton, Stockport, across the road from where I lived with my grandparents. The cover alone was enough; images of this strange new film that people were starting to talk about (*Star Wars* was still six months away from it hitting the UK). Every issue of STARBURST was an education to me. I had been watching sci-fi on TV from an early age. I was also obsessed with fantasy television such as *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *Star Trek*, *Blake's Seven*, and *Doctor Who*. STARBURST became my bible, introducing me to other cult shows such as *The Prisoner*, which was featured in Issue #2. It made me a fan of shows made a decade before I was born. As life progressed, STARBURST guided me as to what to watch and avoid. I got to know the writers such as John Brosnan and Paul Mount. Unlike other magazines, these guys just seemed to say it like it was. I could not believe some of the venting on the letters page. There was no white-wash with the early STARBURST. It felt like podcast culture does now. This bunch were your friends and they were into the same stuff you were. Every month, you would wonder if John Brosnan would upset yet another group of fandom, or Paul Mount would have a meltdown over *Doctor Who* or *Robin of Sherwood*. When I started to drift away - girls, going out, and all that teen stuff - I kept reading STARBURST and it introduced me to one of my favourite movies to date: *Blade Runner*. I was back on track, and never drifted again. I learned everything from STARBURST. It lit the fuse on a lifelong love of genre.

Kris Heys: Equally, massively so. The legend goes, my parents took me to see *Star Wars* when I was a year old. Couldn't get a babysitter. Can't say I recall the experience, but I equally don't remember a day of my life that wasn't somehow influenced by science fiction and/or fantasy cinema. It was in my early teens that I first knew I had a problem. These obsessions weren't going to go away. I'd become a certified movie freak, and I needed to know more. I needed guidance! Annoyingly, the Internet hadn't been invented yet, so we geeks had to depend on our local newsagents. During those formative years, I read everything I could get my hands on - *Premiere*, *Empire*, *Neon*, *Hotdog*, *Sight & Sound*, *cough* *SFX* *cough* - but it was only the likes of STARBURST, *Shivers*, and *Fangoria* that really took that crucial deep dive into the murky waters of cult cinema. I still have a vivid memory of reading STARBURST's *Things to Come* news column shortly after having my mind melted by *Evil Dead 2* on VHS for the first time, and learning that this brilliant Sam Raimi bloke had begun writing a follow-up, *The Medieval Dead*! That was probably the most thrilling paragraph I've ever read. Never missed a day's movie news since. Still chasing that high!

Before becoming involved with the magazine, Kris, you were working in a video store, while Mike, you were working as a barrister. How did your paths eventually cross and when did you realise that you both shared the common interest of all things genre?

Kris: Mike was returning a massively overdue copy of *Legally Blonde* and... I kid. But that discrepancy in our career choices is accurate, yes. I ran independent video stores for the entirety of my twenties - I'm not sure if I've ever mentioned this on STARBURST Radio? I regret nothing. Best years of my life. Present company excluded, of course! Mike and I's paths were always destined to cross eventually as the *Fab Café* acted like a nerd magnet, pulling in geeks like myself from the surrounding Greater Manchester area like a booze-scented tractor beam. That said, it wasn't until a mutual friend suggested I accompany her and some new friends to the thrill-a-minute sci-fi epic *The X-Files: I Want to Believe* back in 2008 that we actually met.

Mike: We had a mutual friend called Helen Lyons-Curran, who has gone on to become an award-winning film director. One night in 2008, we were going to see *X-Files: I Want to Believe* at the Cineworld in Parrs Wood, Manchester. She asked if it was OK for another of her friends to come. We met in the pool hall and it turned out he was a massive fan of the new iPhone. I had one too, and had been boring everyone to death with demos of its abilities. Then it also turned out he loved Joss Whedon and the whole *Buffyverse*. I don't think we stopped talking that night. The latter part of the night involved a brutal assessment of how bollocks that *X-Files* film was.

Kris: Awful movie, but gained a life-long friend, confidant, and creative partner. Clicked instantly. It was well worth having to watch Billy bloody Connelly mope about in the snow for two hours.

Mike, while running Fab Café, you became involved with the magazine initially as an advertiser. Having grown up as such a big fan of STARBURST, was it a tad surreal to then see your own ad featured in the magazine?

Mike: I never tend to mess about, I just booked the whole back cover for the second appearance of Gerry Anderson at **Fab Café**. It felt great to be honest. From then on, I just bagged the back cover when we had anyone big appearing. It was great seeing the **Fab Café** logo on the back cover of **STARBURST**.

Unfortunately, the magazine would have its struggles around that time. To your knowledge, what were the very real issues that were threatening to put the mag out of business back then?

Mike: **STARBURST** - like many long-running publications - changed hands a few times. The first three issues were owned and published by the legendary Dez Skinn himself. Marvel Comics UK offered Dez a job running their UK operation, and turned him into the British version of Stan Lee. As part of the deal, Dez insisted they took **STARBURST** into the Marvel fold. This ensured it could continue in print whilst he ran Marvel UK. Marvel ran **STARBURST** until issue #84, and although the sales were still high, they were not enough for Marvel, who sought a buyer. Visual Imagination took over with issue #85, and would run it until issue #365.

Kris: I have to confess, and this is painful to admit, but it had dropped off my subscription list in that last year or so. I know, I know! It's even worse as I still bought bloody **Heat** at that time! But I think that's very telling. For me, personally, I found that the writing had stopped offering anything new, and lacked passion. It also still felt quite flimsy and wasn't even trying to compete with some of the newcomers on the scene. Whatever difficulties were going on behind the scenes seemed to translate to the page.

Mike: Now it's not really on for me to criticise any previous publisher or editor, or speculate as to where they went wrong, but let's do it anyway. The rot set in first when Visual Imagination spun off the popular **TV Zone** column into a separate magazine. Sure, it was popular, but the juicy TV news and interviews would naturally head over to **TV Zone**, leaving **STARBURST** rather anaemic on that front. Visual Imagination then doubled down on this approach, producing a plethora of mags that bled content away from **STARBURST**. **Cult Times**, a horror mag called **Shivers**, and many, many more. This left **STARBURST** really thin on content, as it would make sense for an interview with a horror director to end up in **Shivers**, or an exclusive interview with the new Doctor Who to end up in **TV Zone**, etc. Poor old **STARBURST** started to resemble a collection of press releases and promo images. About this time, the columns also lost their 'voice' as the mag seemed desperate to be as commercial as



Issue 374. **STARBURST** was back on the shelves, but would this be a very short lived few issues, or would we be back for good?

Initial reaction was polarised regarding the artwork cover, and the decision to return to the original logo (slightly tweaked with the addition of the now-familiar **STARBURST** twinkles).



On the first draft of our **Walking Dead** cover there were some glaring omissions!



Uncle Dez was on hand to provide us with our first variant - drawn by Preacher artist Glenn Fabry.

possible, not wanting to offend anyone, but what the fuck is the point in that? When **SFX** magazine arrived in the early nineties, **STARBURST** was starved for content, and was merely echoing what everyone else was saying. The Golden Age of **STARBURST** was from 1977 through to 1990. During this period, it was an addictive publication. The version of **STARBURST** that was around when the financial banking crisis of 2009 hit was simply not in good enough shape to weather the storm.

When did you realise the opportunity was there to get financially involved in the magazine and take it over? And more importantly, how easy or hard of a decision was it to do that considering the large rescue job that was needed?

Mike: Visual Imagination had failed to pay a paper supplier, and a court order had been issued. Another operator had to take over or it was game over. The amount of money involved in printing a magazine is eye-watering; the losses often wipe out a poor selling publication after only a few issues. People have lost their homes taking on something like this. I had a very long chat with my family, who were supportive if I believed the mag could be made viable again. I knew how to fix it. The mag needed to return to the glory days. The writers needed a voice and to be let off the corporate leash. I would also have to get as many of the old guard back as possible. I had to put the band back together. I decided to go ahead if I could get my friend Kris to join me.

Mike, what was it that made you instantly think of Kris as the perfect person to come in and help steady the ship? And Kris, were you maybe a tad sceptical of the idea at that time?

Mike: I trusted Kris. He was, and is, family. From the moment I met him I knew that at some point he would make it big in the world of filmmaking. He is incredibly disciplined, and I knew he would not flinch when telling me something was not working. It was a no-brainer. Round peg, round hole.

Kris: The prospect seemed too good to be true, that was the only scepticism I had. We all have lofty ideas and plans, but Mike's the first person I've ever known mad enough to actually see each and every one of them through, no matter how insurmountable!

An early move of yours was to reach out and contact STARBURST founder Dez Skinn and long-time fan favourite writer Paul Mount. That seems like a no-brainer of an idea, but how initially receptive were Dez and Mountie to the idea of potentially coming back into the STARBURST fold? And were there any other former names that you reached out to?

Mike: There was a holy trinity in my mind: Dez Skinn, Paul Mount and John Brosnan. Sadly, John had passed away. Died alone after suffering deep depression. One of the flagship columns, **It's Only a Movie** might have had a few writers, but the heart and soul of it belonged to John. I had to consider whether to continue with it. I had no contact details for Dez or Paul. I launched the website to announce that

STARBURST was going to continue online, asking people to register their interest. The first person to fill in the form was a Mr Dez Skinn. Life really is bizarre at times. The following day, Paul Mount emailed asking if he could be considered. Unbelievable! I instantly asked for them to come on board. Dez took on the title as Honorary Editor-in-Chief, and he offered up tons of priceless advice and came up to meet everyone on the launch night. Paul took back his **TV Zone** column and got ready to start upsetting a new generation of **Doctor Who** fans. I then decided that **It's Only a Movie** might be good therapy for me, but even after all these years I just hope John would be OK with what I have done with his column, and forgive me for liking **Star Trek**. I felt very fortunate to have Dez and Paul on board. I didn't need to approach anyone else, just try to get that old magic back, and recruit new blood that understood this old school philosophy.

When the big relaunch came, it was initially purely online rather than going the physical print route. That was most definitely the safe, wise move, but was there any part of you that debated the riskier idea of going straight to print for the relaunch?

Mike: From day one, I wanted **STARBURST** back on the shelves. I merely needed a breather to get the team functioning, and connect back with the old readers and pick up some new ones. Those months online were our **Rocky** montage.

Were there any particular elements of the job that had you thinking 'Oh shit, we could be in well over our heads here' during those early days? And what parts of the job turned out to be a lot harder than you first imagined?

Kris: We realised we were unprepared and woefully under-equipped for every single element of the job from day one! It wasn't just the online magazine content that needed prepping, we first had to actually create and launch the website itself, develop the social media and re-establish the brand. The workload was shocking, and to say our team was small at that point is an understatement. As a result, a full year later, Mike and I realised we hadn't had a single day off. That was definitely an 'oh shit' moment. If I had to choose what I thought was our most surprising hurdle, for me, it was the utter lack of access we had to review materials and talent.

Mike: At the beginning, we had no access to talent. Invites to screenings were thin on the ground. We had to fight to get back on everyone's radar. It was a slog. Turns out that during the last year of the mag, circulation had dropped off a cliff. I had inherited a far worse scenario than had been initially thought. The last issue of the mag had sold a ludicrous 500 copies, a far cry from the 200,000 copies Dez sold of Issue #1.

Kris: For whatever reason, **STARBURST** had now largely been forgotten by the industry, so it really was like starting from scratch. That was rough.

Of course, as it turned out, the magazine would once more go to print relatively shortly after that initial online relaunch.



Issue 380 generated a massive amount of backlash from Judge Dredd message boards, yet conversely was our best-selling issue up to that point.

The controversy?

It was the wrong gun!



On March 19th, 2011, **STARBURST** Radio launched at Manchester Radio Online, hosted by Mike and Kris, and thanks to the support of the station manager Paul Ripley. Immediately launching as a podcast on iTunes, the show attracted lots of listeners, and offended many.

Paul Ripley left to form Fab Radio International with Mike, and gave the show a permanent home.

There was even a live version at the **STARBURST** International Film Festival 2016.



What was it that made you decide to go back to print after just six months or so online, and why did you have such faith that it would work?

Mike: I always have faith that anything I do will work - irrespective of reality [laughs]. The numbers on Twitter had rocketed. Hits on the site had steadily climbed. Our radio show had lots of listeners. It just 'felt' time to return.

Kris: It made sense to me personally, as we were already putting together close to a regular print issue's worth of content each month anyway, and in terms of what was most popular traffic-wise on the site, it seemed such a shame that a single paragraph reporting a rumour on a **Highlander** remake would attract more readers than a 2,000-word article that a writer had poured their heart and soul into. Online just didn't support the kind of material we wanted to put out. When you pick up a magazine, you do so to relax, escape, and take your time with it - unless you're having a cheeky flick in WHSmith's - as opposed to when you're reading on a screen; you're never more than two clicks away from a cat video and your bastard brain knows this! There's too much vying for your attention. When Mike announced that he was thinking of bringing the magazine back proper, it was undoubtedly a huge financial risk, but one that felt like a natural progression.

One of the big moments for our current incarnation of STARBURST was to bringing STARBURST Shauna into the mix. Back when she was known as simply just Shauna, how did you end up bringing her into the magazine and what were the immediate and notable differences that she made to the whole process?

Kris: I don't believe the magazine would be here today if we hadn't met Shauna on that fateful night.

Mike: It was a very strange night when we met Shauna Askew. We had been invited to a nearby art gallery for the viewing of some **Star Trek** paintings.

Kris: Thank god we got dragged to that crappy art gallery opening!

Mike: We headed across town with a Borg (then-boyfriend of our PR Manager) and Shauna was just there dressed in full Vulcan Starfleet uniform. Kris and I started talking to her. We went back to the **Fab Café** - every night tends to end at the **Fab Café** - and we kept in touch afterwards. Shauna is a magical girl, with a lovely, sweet personality. She is obsessed with Halloween, and has a unique perspective on this world. At this time, I was still doing all of the artwork for the entire magazine. Shauna graduated in graphic design so I asked her to come on board and help me out. Thankfully, she did. It was just another fantastic coincidence that added to the **STARBURST** saga.

Kris: Not only did her talent and work ethic elevate the magazine instantly, but she really did save us from ourselves too, filling the office with her unique brand of funny when it was needed most. Her habit of listening to **Halloween Radio** in the height of summer, on the other hand...

Following Shauna's involvement, we developed what has been fondly referred to as the STARBURST Bullpen. While many would like to imagine it as similar to the formation of the Rebel Alliance, to the working together of the Guardians of the Galaxy, or even the assembling of the A-Team, how do you remember our merry bunch of misfits coming together over the past seven years?

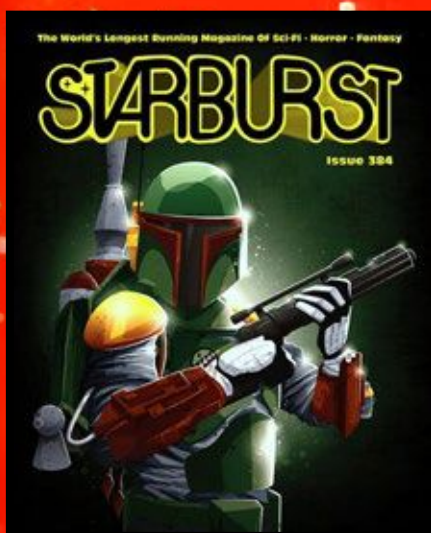
Mike: I am not religious. I don't believe in karma. I believe in science. Yet with STARBURST, it has felt from my first day as though a guiding hand was directing events. Martin Unsworth [our current Assistant Editor] started writing from the very beginning of my tenure, and he had such a similar upbringing; got into horror in a similar way to myself, via the horror double bills on BBC and the VHS tapes at the local video rental shops. Then there was you [your humble scribe, readers] and your interest in comic books. You have been part of this family. You get STARBURST and all its foibles. You have been part of the tapestry. Ed Fortune [our current Literary Editor] and his uncanny ability to devour genre books in a tenth of the time it takes the rest of us. Even Paul Ripley, the manager of Manchester Radio Online, jumped ship to form FAB Radio International with me and give STARBURST Radio a permanent home. STARBURST Magazine is an amazing place to work, with an amazing bunch of people. Interesting weirdos with hearts of gold. It doesn't get any better than this.

Kris: Part of my role was to recruit new talent, so I was constantly reading through writing samples, looking for people who were as passionate about genre as we were, and whose style would be complementary to STARBURST's tone. Looking over the credits of this very issue, it's so satisfying to see just how many of those writers are still there, producing such stellar content month in, month out. And that includes your very good self, sir! Without wanting to come across all gooey, I'll never forget just what a monumental difference to the 'Burst you made. I lost count of the times I'd email you at 4am, desperately pitching you an emergency six-page feature that we needed turning around by yesterday! No challenge was too great. I still don't understand how you do what you do! We honestly couldn't have wished for a better writing team.

By the time of the relaunch, social media had become a huge, huge deal, not just in entertainment but in life in general for many. Twitter was hugely pushed from the get-go for us, so how easy was it to get that initial word spread and to get that initial buzz out when essentially starting from scratch with social media?

Mike: Our Twitter account exploded from day one. I think the interest in STARBURST Radio and the fact it was also available as a podcast helped. We started the show just as podcast culture caught fire. Kris always told me podcasts would be huge. He was so on the money. Within the first year, we had over 200,000 followers on Twitter. That was one of the primary persuaders for me when it came to the decision to get this magazine back on the shelves where it belonged.

Another big way of reconnecting with



Issue 384 was a landmark issue for more than one reason. It was the first cover drawn by the legendary Mark Reihill, whose covers have become synonymous with that STARBURST 'look'.

Sadly, we also introduced you to the 'Mothership Connection' - Fully rendered in 3D, followed up by an invitation to journey with us into 'The Great Unknown'.

Two of the biggest errors ever to go to print, and both lovingly created by the Editor himself.

Unbelievably, these went unnoticed for weeks until Dez Skinn spotted them when he dropped in for a 'health check' on the mag.



old fans while also branching out and bringing in new fans was the launch of the aforementioned STARBURST Radio, nowadays on Fab Radio International and previously on Manchester Radio Online. What prompted the decision to do a radio show, and was there any trepidation or nerves about putting yourselves out there in the public eye (or is that ears?) in the way that you were now a voice being broadcast across the world as opposed to having the relative safety blanket of being a written voice online at that time (and later in print)?

Mike: Paul Ripley was the manager of Manchester Radio Online. A mutual friend mentioned to him that I was taking over STARBURST. He wanted someone to review movies. He asked my friend Steve if I would be interested. I was a bit cheeky and said I would if I could call it STARBURST Radio. I was not expecting that to be acceptable, to be honest, but Paul Ripley said yes. This presented me with a three-hour-a-week platform to promote the mag. I then had to convince Kris Heys that he was going to be a radio presenter.

Kris: Friends know that I'm practically a recluse, and back then the idea of being in the limelight in any way made my skin crawl. I also had zero interest in radio - neither as a listener nor as a career option. Naturally, Mike thought I'd be perfect for the job! All that said, I was an avid podcast fan, and seven years ago, when the medium was in its infancy, shows were uniformly more casual and rougher around the edges. Now that I could get behind. The graveyard timeslot also really did give us the freedom to do as we pleased, and bring a little unpredictability to the proceedings; tap into the vibe of the same late night live shows we loved growing up. It was kind of like The Word, but with more references to Worzel Gummidge. Oh, and as for nerves, of course, yes, I was bricking it. Booze helped. Unless you were the listener, in which case booze contributed to shows regularly running over by several hours.

Mike: The first few shows, we had a few brandies and just ignored the fact we were on air. We just tried to chill out and shoot the breeze. Once we got arguing over movies, it was easy to forget all of the listeners. Putting the show on iTunes as a podcast was always the goal, and we did this from the very beginning. This was a major building block that reconnected us with the lost readership. The fact that we were an abysmal mess at the beginning, I have been told was endearing. The fact that we haven't improved much, probably less so.

One of our big selling points is our unique Collectors' Edition covers. When the magazine was first relaunched under your stewardship, the call was made to go with purely artwork-only covers. That was a great idea in how it looked great and made us stand out, but then there was also the fact that those who happened to just stumble across the magazine in a shop wouldn't necessarily know about all of the non-cover-specific content that was included due to the cover being minimal in text. Why did you decide to move away from the artwork-only covers, and was there ever the worry that following the

standard format of other magazines out there would make us feel like just yet another of those standard publications and take away some of our identity?

Mike: I just hate the covers of *Total Film* and other crap magazines that put a pile of bollocks on their covers. Please tell me, what is 'The Summer Issue' or 'The Blockbuster Issue'? It's just bibble and nonsense. I wanted a clean, fresh look. I felt artwork delivered that, and would help us to stand out. It's now time for me to fess up - it didn't work. There was a reader who criticised our art cover on Issue #374. I laid into him, stating, "Read my lips. Whilst I am Editor there will never be a photo cover".

Kris: As a reader, hyperbolic cover lines have always seemed tacky to me. When was the last time anybody actually decided on a purchase based on a single one? 'The Ultimate Guide to This', 'The Definitive Top 1000 of That'. It may have been a mistake to go so minimal in the first wave of issues, sure, but I like that we eventually landed on a nice compromise with #402. It's still one of my favourite covers.

Mike: What a chump I am! I persevered until issue #402. Sales were strong, but the distributors were begging me to go with a photo cover. I caved in. The result? A photographic cover of a monkey face sold 30% more copies. Jeez. Life, eh? Why? Two reasons. Firstly, the staff in many newsagents have had a lobotomy at some stage, and cannot stop putting *STARBURST* in with the children's comics. Secondly, a photo is not subjective. A picture of Darth Vader is the same for all of us. A drawn image of Vader is subject to us all liking the artwork. Now we have the perfect balance with a newsstand photo cover in the mainstream outlets, and the awesome artwork of Mark Reihill in specialist shops and available to subscribers. Ah well, it's only cost me a few hundred grand to learn that lesson!

Kris: And having the two options just means *STARBURST* can have its cake and eat it, too. It's also worth noting the top-selling movie mag in the world has started to lean heavily on artwork covers for their subscriber editions of late. Not saying they were motivated by *STARBURST*'s awesome output, but they definitely probably were.

As well as the 40th anniversary, we've had some other huge moments over the past few years – most notably the landmark 400th issue from 2014, and then the STARBURST International Film Festival, which launched in 2016. When taking over the reins of STARBURST, could you ever have imagined that those milestones would be reached?

Kris: I honestly didn't think we'd be alive to see them, no.

Mike: From the very beginning I discussed holding a *STARBURST* Film Festival. It just seemed a natural evolution. Another important mission statement to me was the introduction of the *Independents* Day column, as I was so sick of the reluctance of the magazine industry as a whole to support smaller, independent



Issue 391 prompted a complaint the length of the Magna Carta. In this issue, we featured a double-page spread featuring Chlöe Moretz (who had recently gained some Grace).

This was woeful neglect of words in favour of the design element. When confronted with the fact that our word count was a third higher than *Empire*, and with 10 pages fewer ads, the reader informed us, "Errr, yes, well I have complained to them as well!"



Issue 384 and the great 'hippo tits' crisis.

The mag was about to be sent to print, and Kris had taken umbrage over an image of a topless Heidi from *Meet the Feebles*. Bearing in mind the cover featuring Kermit, Kris felt strongly that a pair of purple velvet mammaries might be a step over the line even for a mag that often courted controversy, and embraced irreverence.

The editorial standoff continued into the early hours until Kris got his way. The topless pseudo-muppet hippo was no more, and a generation of youths were saved from a velvet-nippled spiral into depravity.

filmmakers. The corporate lot are just not interested as there is no kickback. It's all about money with those guys. With *Independents* Day thriving, the *Festival* was the next step. Although I could not have dreamt that we would be approached by Media City in Manchester to host it, and that television networks would be open to being involved. Conversely, from day one, I was dreading Issue #400, and the 40-year anniversary issues - if I survived in the job that long! - due to the level of expectation. 40 years is a lot of history and heritage to celebrate. Hopefully, the gang and I have not let *STARBURST* down.

On the topic of SIFF, what can you tell our readers about this coming March's STARBURST Festival at this stage, and what are your aspirations for the event moving forward over the next, say, five years?

Mike: Well, it is now officially titled the *STARBURST Media City Festival*. With Media City on board, and such an amazing venue [The Landing], we hope to take things to a whole new level. We want to represent movies, television, gaming, books, and much, much more. Being based at Media City will help us to attract some fantastic guests, and we also hope to get some workshops organised by industry professionals. We have the option to expand the number of floors, and within five years, we hope this will be one of the major festivals in the UK.

What's your favourite memory so far of your time involved with STARBURST Magazine? And secondly, just how enjoyable was it to sniff the freshly-printed smell of STARBURST #374 when the print relaunch happened in 2012?

Mike: On the night Issue #374 went to print, everything went wrong. Thankfully, Dez Skinn was on hand and he gave us a masterclass in print deadline management. He saved the day. The lessons learned that night got us on the right track. His knowledge of print formatting was awe-inspiring. I have to say that over the last 70 issues, I have been so grateful to have him around. He is a great bloke. Like a favourite uncle.

Kris: It was ill-adviseable to sniff those first few issues too deeply as we'd used a budget printers based in Latvia or some such place.

Mike: Lithuania.

Kris: Wherever it was, the pages fucking stank. Whatever inks they were using over there need to be outlawed pronto, as they have migraine-inducing properties. But aside from that, it was an absolute thrill to hold that first issue in our hands.

Mike: When Issue #374 was delivered, it was an incredible moment. We were very happy with the results. The smell of the print, however, could not penetrate the smell of the solvent used for binding by our cost-cutting Lithuanian printers. We used them for the first six issues, and the smell of having multiple issues in a confined space was quite something. I had eight boxes in my car, and by the time I got home, I was literally high as a kite.

The ground was spongy and I felt like Neil Armstrong taking a lunar stroll. Heavens only knows what solvent they used, but it sure ain't used over here. Suffice to say, we switched to a UK-based printer as soon as possible, later finding our permanent home with the excellent Buxton Press - Northern-based printing legends.

Kris: It represented so much hard work and personal sacrifice from everybody involved. Blood, sweat, and tears. Come to think of it, that was probably what those dodgy Latverian printers actually made their ink from. Looking at #374 now, it's hard to comprehend how over-the-moon we were with it, as the magazine has evolved so much since then. Perhaps we were just high on those fumes at the time. In terms of my personal highlight, it was probably getting to meet the long-time readers and listeners at last year's **SIFF**. Amazing weekend!

As a pair, you two worked brilliantly well for years, with both of you bringing different points of views and different skillsets to the table. Would you pinpoint those differences as being what made you so, so effective together or was there more to it than that?

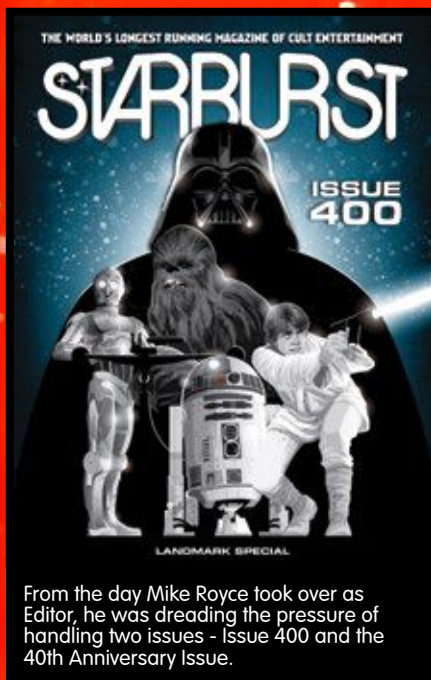
Mike: We were like a Venn diagram. We had a very similar work ethos; things had to be perfect. My area of intensity was the graphic design side, and I was very determined to make the mag look aesthetically unique, whilst Kris treated the content like a newborn baby. Every piece was nurtured and proofread to perfection. The end result was an independently produced magazine that could sit on the shelf with magazines produced by huge publishing houses. Our love for the genre, I felt, showed on every page. With regards to the radio show and podcast, that is me and Kris being me and Kris. I love working with him. I massively respect him.

Kris: Well, in terms of **STARBURST Radio**, I think our friendship and natural rapport definitely shone through. You can't fake that. And I think we've all heard shows that attempt to. Painful. Our show was designed to feel like we were just chatting over drinks on a night out, bickering about movies. Funnily enough, the last episode we recorded was just us chatting over drinks on a night out, bickering about movies! We really committed to that initial mission statement!

Looking back at what seems like an age ago now, if you could go back and speak to your younger selves, what changes would you make with how STARBURST has been handled since the 2011 relaunch?

Mike: I would say two words to my younger self - photo cover.

Kris: Many, many mistakes spring to mind, but each and every one just paved the way for the magazine to improve. Given the limited resources, I can honestly say we did the absolute best we possibly could each and every month. But since you've introduced time travel... I'd go back and find **STARBURST** Shauna sooner, I'd anonymously troll Mike about his artwork cover stance so he relented quicker, and I'd have taken a picture of the monstrous urinal turd I saw at **AndCon 2014** because nobody believes me to this day.



From the day Mike Royce took over as Editor, he was dreading the pressure of handling two issues - Issue 400 and the 40th Anniversary Issue.



Issue 402 marked the return to photo covers for the newsstand edition, resulting in a large increase in sales. A sad day for creative integrity.

To wrap things up, how would you summarise this whole rollercoaster of a journey so far for yourselves both on a personal and professional level, and more importantly, would you do it all over again if you somehow ended up back in 2011?

Mike: Yeah, I certainly would do it again. Because of this mag, I have ended up working with some of my best friends. I have had crazy adventures. I have also met and befriended some of the readers, who are just great. It has given me a lot. I can only hope that the readers might think in years to come that I did a good job. I hope they know I cared. I obviously can't keep this up forever, but it will be a really sad day when I go, as I will be walking away from the best job I will ever have.

Kris: That last part is a very difficult question to answer honestly. While it's incredibly humbling to see **STARBURST** doing so well and being enjoyed by so many, the undertaking was unlike anything we'd ever experienced workload-wise, and it took its toll on many aspects of all our personal lives, straining relationships and, on occasion, sanity! I'd like to be able to say 'yes', but it's more realistic to imagine that presented with the choice, I'd just go into hiding instead.

Finally, this has been 40 years and 443 issues. Where do we see the magazine going from here? And Kris, do you ever see yourself getting fully back on the horse with the magazine on a day-to-day basis?

Mike: I just want the mag to outlive me. I want to have retired one day and see it still on the shelf introducing young people to the joys of genre, keeping some of these classic movies and shows alive, encouraging people to take a chance and have a go at making that movie, carving out a career in television, or writing that script. Getting involved in genre. Then, to me, it will have all been worth it.

Kris: The **STARBURST** team is at the strongest it's ever been going into #444 and beyond, so there's precious little room in the bullpen for me these days. If they ever need me, I'll be there in a flash. All that said, Mike and I do have some other projects cooking, so I'll never really leave the **STARBURST** orbit!



Kris Heys and Mike Royce - Enjoying some precious downtime with an old friend...

STARBURST MEMORIES

As we reach our fortieth year, we've asked some of our writers to reminisce about their history with the magazine and what it means for them. Get on your comfy slippers and join us as we take a trip down memory lane...



Martin Unsworth

Being a massive fan (at a very early age) of the magazine *The House of Hammer* (which had several name changes), which was published by one Dez Skinn, I was really keen to get the new magazine he was producing, not least because it had coverage of a certain space epic that would soon consume my young life. But one later issue really stood out for me while I was still very impressionable. It was Issue 40, with a gloriously gory posed photo from *An American Werewolf in London* on the cover. Back then, the mag was mostly black and white, with a colour cover and several colour pages inside. This issue certainly made use of those pages. Slap bang on the inside front cover was the shocking image of David Kessler having his throat slit by a grotesque-looking Nazi. Blimey, I was hooked. Not only were there numerous other gruesome images, not just from Landis' film, but Lucio Fulci's *The Beyond* and Gary Sherman's *Dead and Buried* (even though his name is spelt Shurman in the review - a mistake like that would never possibly happen now [Haha - Ed]). I certainly shouldn't have been subjected to these images, being a good seven years too young to legally see them, but boy, did they have an effect! Almost as much as the 'Fantasy Females in Jeopardy' or the bare breasts in the piece on Walerian Borowczyk's *Doctor Jekyll's Women* (which I actually wouldn't get to see properly until it was released by Arrow as *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Miss Osbourne*). I was only reading it for the review of *The Fox and the Hound*; honest, Mum! Mind you, the juxtaposition of the gore-filled *American Werewolf* image with the largely forgotten Disney movie of the cover is enough to raise a smile these days (particularly to those of us who know all about 'hippitisgate'). How times have changed.

The issue also caused a bit of a fuss with the readers, who complained about the gore. One person even suggested changing the name of the mag to *Bloodburst*. Aren't we lucky the team back then didn't run with that idea?

Paul Mount

STARBURST Magazine came into my life with its very first issue, way back in 1978 (before even VHS was a thing) and, as an opinionated *Doctor Who*-crazed teenager, the magazine

was a gateway into an exploration of the worlds of science fiction and fantasy, worlds I was already aware of thanks to a vigorous TV education in classic horror cinema and, of course, the explosion of imaginative telly and comics which bled right through the 1960s and '70s. But this was a different; a whole - if slim - magazine that spoke with reverence, authority and intelligence about my sort of entertainment. They even took *Doctor Who* seriously at a time when it was just starting to get a bit silly. I can't say any particular one of those early issues stood out - the whole magazine was a monthly experience; a labour of love from people who lived and breathed this stuff and who worked hard to get it right - and it's no exaggeration to say that the same remains true of its 21st century reinvention. I somehow scrambled aboard the magazine in Issue 88 when set visit material from the BBC's lame *Doctor Who* replacement *The Tripods* intended for the glossy fan-produced magazine *Fantasy Empire* ended up in STARBURST when London-based Visual Imagination wrestled the magazine's reigns from a disinterested UK Marvel. The rest is my own little bit of history; ten years helming the TV Zone column, winding up *Robin of Sherwood* and *Doctor Who* fans (some things never change) and now, forty years on from the magazine's début, bumbling along trying to keep up with the sea of genre TV generated by a terrifying number of viewing platforms and broadening my horizons by occasionally chatting to very nice filmmakers, actors and writers and passing sometimes caustic judgement on their work when it doesn't hit the mark. So for me, 40 years of STARBURST isn't about 440-odd issues, it's about the massive legacy of an enduring, indomitable British institution and my own little contribution towards making it something special for its very special readers. I still preferred it when it was *Opal Fruits*, though. Comedy gold.

Andrew Pollard

For me, my first memory of the magazine was issue #168. Michelle Pfeiffer's Catwoman was on the cover, meaning it was likely at some point in 1992 ahead of *Batman Returns*' release. I'd have been a whopping ten years of age and was instantly drawn in by the wide eyes of Catwoman. Sadly, it was always awkward to get hold of STARBURST in my small North Wales town back then. Years later, it would be #386 that would really grab my attention once more thanks to the jaw-dropping *Evil Dead* cover, and I'd actually become a part of the 'BURST team by the very next issue. In terms of personal favourites that I've been involved in, #389 holds a special place in my heart as that was my first published feature (a far-too-lengthy-in-hindsight Superman comic book retrospective). Then I adored #393 for its gloriously twisted Chucky cover and for allowing me to wax lyrical about the *Child's Play* franchise amongst other things. The *Kick-Ass* special that was #391 was similarly amazing to look at thanks to more of Diego Patino's memorable cover art, this time of Hit-Girl. Then there was the Paul Louden-designed cover to #406, which paid homage to the classic *Batman* show of the '60s. Finally, one last issue that's worthy of mention is, of course, the landmark #400, which was a huge privilege to be involved in and provide some ramblings for. So, to STARBURST and to 40 more years - by which time many of us will be long dead! [Always the life and soul of the party, Polly! - Ed]

Kieron Moore

I'm one of the younger members of the STARBURST team, as astutely deduced by last month's letter complaining about my ignorance

of '80s computer culture, and so you're not getting any nostalgia from me about how the mag used to be my only way of keeping up with film news due to lack of Wi-Fi in my coal mine (damn '80s Internet, eh?). Anyway, just a few memories that spring to mind from my past few years with the 'BURST:

- + First discovering that a magazine sharing my love of sci-fi exists, and that it's based in beautiful, rainy Manchester;
- + Long nights helping put the magazine together, before we discovered the existence of 'daytime';
- + The time I accidentally inserted the surname of a *Doctor Who* actor into the middle of JR's column in full caps and it got printed;
- + Realising I'd stumbled into something good when meeting people who remembered STARBURST from decades past;
- + Blagging press tickets to the cat equivalent of Crufts because it had a sci-fi theme;
- + Worrying if the first STARBURST Film Festival would be a disaster;
- + The first STARBURST Film Festival being far from a disaster.

So, congratulations on forty years, STARBURST, and here's to another ECCLESTON!? forty.

Nick Spacek

When I was younger, my favourite thing here in the States was getting to go from my small Midwestern town into Kansas City, and hitting up the big book stores there. I'd always hit up the magazine racks and go berserk, trying to see what kind of genre magazines were available. I especially loved the genre magazines, and the way it seemed like the people who really

loved the movies and books and comics were the ones writing about them. It seemed like it would be the coolest thing in the world to get to do that. The STARBURST was always a favourite because it seemed like it was the most fan-based of them all. Colour me surprised when I found myself writing again after getting out of an unhappy job situation, and got to start doing little news items for the STARBURST website. Now, I get to be part of the team, even if I'm all the way on the other side of the Atlantic and halfway across another continent. Seeing my name in the masthead of STARBURST is the absolute highlight of every month, and I hope I can inspire some other kid with glasses and iffy choices in T-shirts.

Jack Bottomley

I remember my first discovery of STARBURST as I was pursuing a love of films academically, it was an *Alien vs. Predator: Requiem* issue, a few years before the print revamp in 2012. However, my first real STARBURST memory came in 2013, when I sent an email asking for some work experience to Jordan Royce. I not only received a reply but to my surprise, I received an exciting work offer, which went on to last five or more weeks. The rest, as they say, is history. STARBURST Magazine means an awful lot to me, as the kindness shown, friendships formed and the platform given to my work has been unforgettable. I will always remember submitting my first news story (about *Pacific Rim*), under the wise guidance of one Kris Heys, and being overjoyed at seeing my name on the site! There have been many fab issues of the mag over the years but I will always most cherish Issue 395 - the 2014 Preview Issue - the most, as it featured my first published review (*Escape Plan*) and I was so thankful.





That year started a heck of a journey with team STARBURST and that continues to this day.

Kate Fathers

If there's one issue that shines out like the light on the top of a police box, it's Issue 428. In every incarnation, *Star Trek* has been a celebration of the strength and kindness and strangeness humanity is able to find both in the universe and within themselves, and when STARBURST decided to celebrate fifty years of *Star Trek*, it looked to those same qualities. It boldly delved in to the feminism of *Friday's Child* and the wonderful weirdness of the holodeck. It wrote a loving tribute to Chekov and waded through five decades' worth of board games, action figures, and embarrassing hats. It has the piece I'm most proud of. It embraced everything *Star Trek* has to offer - the inspirational and the outright ridiculous - proving that *Star Trek* not only impacted our modern world, it helped shape who we are. *Star Trek* made us wiser. *Star Trek* made us hopeful. For some of us, *Star Trek* was the first science fiction we were exposed to, and it instilled in us an openness and curiosity that is threaded through every article and every column in this issue. It's a 130-page thank you to a show many writers and fans would be different people without.

James Hanton

My first experience of the magazine was one of wonder and appreciation but also nervousness. I was nervous because the first time I ever saw the magazine involved wandering into a dodgy corner shop with my partner at 9pm at night with a stern looking shopkeeper giving me unimpressed looks. I spotted Issue 430, with *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* on the front cover, and while penniless at the time, vowed to come back and indulge myself in its pages.

By the time that happened, Issue 431 leading with *Rogue One* had taken its place. I bought it, started reading and quite simply would not put it down. The detail, humour and variety of the content were like nothing I had experienced before. Easily the best magazine I ever read.

After receiving Issue 432 for my birthday (yep), I saw the call-out for writers and licked my lips with anticipation. Several months later, I have a number of reviews for STARBURST under my name. Having my writing accepted for a magazine like this, so soon after discovering it, is a crowning glory of my short life so far.

Andrew Marshall

Possibly a little self-indulgent, but my greatest memory of STARBURST is issue 402, which contained the first full feature I wrote for the magazine, a preview of *True Blood*'s final season and a retrospective of its previous six, which I subsequently used to annoy the hell out of everyone I knew by ceaselessly showing it in their faces.

What I love most about writing for STARBURST is the magazine's ceaseless mission to champion independents. Over the last few years, attending conventions and festivals and getting to know numerous filmmakers and comic book creators, it gives me hope that in a world where entertainment is becoming increasingly homogenised, there are still inventive creatives out there, and STARBURST is at the forefront of giving them a voice.

Mark Newbold

My first experience of STARBURST was back in June 1987, when I grabbed a copy off the rack in my local branch of Preedy's. It was Issue 106, featuring an interview with the late, great James Doohan, then in the UK to promote *Star*

Trek IV. The issue also focused on *A.L.F.*, Tobe Hooper's remake of *Invaders From Mars*, the always awesome *STARBURST* record shop column, Terry Pratchett's *Equal Rites*, and a look at the new *Doctor Who*, Sylvester McCoy, with companion Bonnie Langford in *Strange Matter* (aka *Time and the Rani*).

Of most interest to me at the time, as my fascination with all things *Trek* grew while my beloved *Star Wars* entered a near half-decade hibernation, was news of a new *Star Trek* TV series. In an article entitled *Fuzzy New Trek*, we learned that the show would feature 'Julian Picard' and first officer 'William Ryker', would shoot at the start of June and be shown on October 3rd or 4th in the States (but no news on the UK transmission). Aaaaand that the legendary Leonard Nimoy turned down a role, despite Vulcans living longer. Ahhhh, happy days!

J.R. Southall

It started with *The House of Hammer*, and its glorious black and white comic strip recreations of films I was too young to have seen (and in many cases, still never have). It was probably the same instinct that had led to me falling so deeply for *Doctor Who*. And then I discovered that there was a *Doctor Who Monthly* magazine, and the disappearance of the other title didn't matter so much. When I found something else on the shelf in the newsagents one week, something promising features about 'BBC's *Day of the Triffids*' - including full-colour pictures, a permanent reminder of something that had

been on the television but was now gone forever - I was hooked straight in. *STARBURST* Magazine, Issue 39. Even at a still tender age, I managed to buy up back issues, with further, lasting, photographic souvenirs of films and TV programmes that the pre-video age dictated I would probably never see again. And the film reviews! Not so much that month, but at other times, so many zombie films and other kinds of shockers. Films I was too young to have seen (and in many cases, still never have), but oh my, the writing about them was so much fun to read!

Scott Varnham

I've written for *STARBURST* for around five years now; that's five years of press screenings and reviewing cool books. By far my favourite experience was going to the *STARBURST* Film Festival last year. I spent three glorious days watching as much as I could and getting to know my fellow writers in the bar each night - my highlights were finally getting to meet the mag's former Assistant Editor Kris Heys, and spending around twenty minutes talking about Robert Rankin's books with industry legend Dez Skinn. *STARBURST* is one hell of a magazine, and it's given me some treasured memories.

Ed Fortune

My first memory of *STARBURST* was via the pages of Marvel UK's *Incredible Hulk* comic book. An advert for something all about sci-fi caught my fevered imagination pretty early on. Especially as my family didn't have a VHS

player; magazines were pretty much the only way to stay current with the world of sci-fi back then. Over the years I lost touch with the magazine, distracted by heavy metal and tight leather trousers. It would be decades later when I would find myself nervously turning up to a grotty Manchester pub to watch the stage adaptation of a comic book series. My review of that show was an audition to become a regular writer for this fine magazine, and the rest is history.

Jon Toulson

The issue that really got me into *STARBURST* was number 48 - the zombie issue. I'd bought a few copies before then, but this was the one that made me take out a subscription with my local newsagent so I could have *STARBURST* drop through my letterbox every month! Issue 48 has three brilliant interviews in it: with George A. Romero, Lucio Fulci, and Jean Rollin. What more could a fifteen-year-old horror fan ask? But that was not all. There are retrospectives of *Night of the Living Dead* by Martin Coxhead; reviews of the then-newly released *Nightmares in a Damaged Brain*, *City of the Living Dead* and *Parasite*; a feature on French telefantasy by *STARBURST* stalwart Tony Crawley; a piece on zombies on TV by Richard Hollis; a report on the short-lived 1980s 3D craze; plus all the regular features. The centerpiece of this issue has to be the in-depth look at the history of zombie movies (again by Coxhead). It's a great watch-list for anyone interested in the walking dead.





Issue 48 made me realise that STARBURST was - and still is - the best. It's colourful, fun and really informative.

Christian Jones

My introduction to STARBURST Magazine was through my grandmother. She bought me the first issue way back in 1977, and like the majority of the world back then, I had well and truly succumbed to *Star Wars* fever. So to see a magazine that not only featured my new favourite film on its cover, but also my favourite TV show, *Star Trek*, was a double whammy that proved irresistible. My favourite issue though is #62 from October 1983, the *Twilight Zone* issue. I had seen the TV spots for the movie, which piqued my curiosity, and I was vaguely aware that it had been a TV show. I devoured every morsel of information the feature article had to offer, which only made me hungrier to know more about the history of this landmark TV series. The selection of sidebars featuring Rod Serling's opening introductions, biographies of the show's main writers - Richard Matheson, Earl Hamner Jr., and Charles Beaumont (whose childhood was as macabre as his stories) - and the episode guide all served to ignite an unquenchable interest in seeing the series. Fortunately, BBC Two began broadcasting select episodes that very month late on Saturday nights. If it wasn't for STARBURST, I might never have taken my first steps into... *The Twilight Zone*.

Michael Coldwell

I was a spotty ten-year-old in April 1979 when I first happened upon STARBURST. It was Issue 9, promoting Ralph Bakshi's rotoscope *Lord of the Rings* movie. As a Gerry Anderson fan, I was more interested in the photo of Thunderbird

1 on the cover and the interview inside with VFX maestro Brian Johnson. STARBURST immediately became a monthly ritual; I let it blitz my brain with the careers of David Cronenberg, Lucio Fulci, and George Romero; with TV shows like *The Outer Limits*, *Journey to the Unknown*, and *The Prisoner*; and with new and classic movies like *Alien*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, and *Forbidden Planet*. Best memory? In 1980, I took my prized STARBURST mags to school and proudly passed them around the playground. The sports teacher marched up and feverishly grabbed a copy, hoping to confiscate another *Razzle* or *Whitehouse* for his growing collection. Instead, he saw an interview with BBC man Matt Irvine about converting hairdryers into spaceships for *Blake's 7*. "Oh... right, good magazine, that!" he mumbled before passing it back to me and walking off, seriously puzzled. Thanks to STARBURST, he had just encountered a new and dangerous species that would soon inherit the earth: the geek!

Jonathan Anderson

I first got involved with STARBURST nearly six years ago, so the issues in the late 300s are special to me as that's when I first saw my work published. I started on comic reviews, occasionally writing features, and then graduated to my main love of film. I've been lucky enough to experience FrightFest and a few other cool events, usually involving zombies (*Fear the Walking Dead*, *Resident Evil*). My highlight has been interviewing Jean-Pierre Jeunet, one of my favourite directors. He was crazy, but in the best possible way, and very honest and talkative. The magazine has grown like a B-movie beast. My only regret is - being based in London - I don't get to see the Fab Café or the team more often!

Robert Martin

I bought STARBURST from the very first issue, but it was Issue 3, from May 1978, with behind the scenes reports and the first UK review of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, which really hooked me. At the age of 12, I was obsessed with the film, it being a far more significant piece of cinema for me than *Star Wars* ever was or ever will be, and the coverage in Issue 3 turned up my fascination in cinema into a lifelong passion. You could say it was life forming. I studied film for my degree, wrote my dissertation on *Blade Runner*, taught film at Manchester Uni, had a radio film review show, and went on to edit Time Out Manchester, where I came back into contact with STARBURST all those years later. Now I write for the very mag that inspired it all in the first place, something that makes me smile like Puck. And yes, I do still have my copy of Issue 3...

John Higgins

Well, the first time is the real charm - and my favourite has to be Issue 22, published in May 1980. It was in a newsagent near my home and I was an impressionable eleven-year-old.

A genre fan's dream, it featured a preview of *The Empire Strikes Back* with Chewie on the cover, plus the Top 20 Sci-Fi and Fantasy Films of 1979, interviews with John Carpenter and David Cronenberg, as well as unforgettable reviews of *When Time Ran Out* by the late great John Brosnan and Tony Crawley's *Things To Come* section, which still opens the magazine today.

I never looked back after that, with the likes of Issues 33 (with *Scanners* on the cover) and 43, which headlined *Halloween II* with the scalded face of the nurse on the cover. Issue

33 also featured the Top 200 Sci-Fi and Horror films, with notes about where each film was. The top three in 1981: *Star Wars*, *Jaws* and *The Empire Strikes Back*!

Robin Pierce

Issue 4 was a landmark issue of STARBURST. For the first time, Marvel Comics was now the publisher and the magazine was committed to a monthly release schedule rather than bi-monthly. This transition meant a lower print run for this issue, making it a rare collector's item. I bought mine second-hand in 1985 for four times the cover price (that's a whole £2!). Money well spent.

Lou Ferrigno as the Hulk was the main feature of this distinctive yellow cover, and a feature about the Hulk in the media was the first feature, as to quote the closing sentence, 'superheroes are crashing into the worlds of TV and cinema'. There was also an article about Marvel's comic book adaptations of the big SF blockbusters - *Logan's Run*, *Close Encounters*, *Star Wars*, etc.

Back then, an important part of the magazine for me was the retrospective look at sci-fi classics, and this issue did us proud with a look at *The War of the Worlds* (1953).

From a nostalgic point of view, there's a fascinating ad on the back page. For the price of £6.25, you could own an eight-minute, silent, monochrome spool of *Star Wars* to show on a projector in your own home.

Issue 62 hit the shops to coincide with the release of *Twilight Zone: The Movie* and was respectfully dedicated to the memory of series creator Rod Serling. The bulk of the issue was dedicated to an in-depth look at the film and the original show that I knew virtually nothing about. It hadn't been shown in the UK since the early sixties - though that would change.

The concept of the series as recounted in the issue immediately caught my imagination and as soon as episodes began to be shown in a late night spot on BBC Two, it became my all-time favourite TV programme, replacing *Star Trek*. Issue 62 became my constant companion during that late night run in late '83 and it's still treasured to this day.

The secondary article was an extensive interview with *Something Wicked This Way Comes* director Jack Clayton, prior to the release of the film later that year. That was the film that nudged me to read more of Ray Bradbury's works. All in all, looking back, Issue 62 was a pretty important issue for me on a personal level, opening doors to shows and books I might otherwise have missed.

James Bridcut

It was the spring of 2012 and I was off work sick. Acknowledging that I was not quite myself, my wife decided to cheer me up by buying me a copy of a 'new' sci-fi mag that she had discovered on the shelves of our local post office. When I was handed it, I was immediately drawn to the Avengers artwork that adorned the cover and how the seemingly 'low-fi' aesthetic of the cover brilliantly eschewed the glossy/superficial approach of its more renowned peers - it instantly felt like something created by genre fans for genre fans. It was STARBURST Issue 376.

The idea to have a 'theme' for each issue and mine every facet of that month's chosen subject/franchise was both revelatory and informative.

I found the style and approach refreshing and the wealth of content mindboggling - with not a single studio-pandering puff piece in sight. I was immediately hooked and STARBURST is now my go-to publication for 'cult entertainment'. Five years on and not only



is the magazine better than ever but I have even become a contributor. Happy birthday and here's to the next 40 years!

James Evans

Although including amongst other goodies a preview for 2015, Issue 408 was really all about Hammer, and for me, it's a prime example of how STARBURST importantly rolls differently to other genre titles in its approach. Yes, there's an 'essential 30 list' and a history of the studio, but then there's also a cliché guide (a dangerous drinking game), and a Hammer glamour (of course) and Hammer hunks list (the only time Dennis Waterman will ever be featured on a list of hunks). Add to that an article on Hammer legend Michael Ripper, the comedy output of the studio, their prime competitor Amicus and the studio's later years and you get the type of fun, in-depth, thoroughly enjoyable focus on a theme that STARBURST frequently does so well.

It's the sweet spot between assuming you as a reader could know pretty much nothing or pretty much everything about the subject matter and making the articles and features appealing to each audience, and here it was done in style.

As *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* hit cinemas in 2015, STARBURST took the opportunity to revisit all that makes tele-fantasy glorious and it resulted in a hugely enjoyable Issue 415, which for this writer, is one of the magazine's greatest. From the show that Ritchie's film

version was based on, via the best this genre has to offer (*The Avengers*, *Sapphire and Steel*, small screen spies et al.) it was a celebration of the larger-than-life shows and characters that dominated television's emerging creativity in (mostly) the '60s and '70s and the love and enthusiasm that came through from each writer hopefully introduced some timeless entertainment to a new audience in dire need of a break from doom and gloom.

Sadly, this issue also reflected on the passing of two legends, Patrick Macnee and Christopher Lee. But this is another area where for me STARBURST stands apart. Not for this magazine the 'pre-approved' sloppy obituaries that other titles trotted out. We lost two stars who had brought so much to our lives and it felt like STARBURST actually cared enough to really think about and say what they meant and continue to mean.

Christopher Morley

In consideration of my own mere footnote in the long-term margins of STARBURST - 40 years being no mean feat (that's only about ten less than *Doctor Who* has been showcasing its wares as a prime exponent of a very British take on science fiction, just to put this in perspective), I have to conclude that has been an absolute privilege to be part of the newly regenerated magazine, starting from around Issue 435 and our look at *Guardians Of The Galaxy*, apt as STARBURST itself appears to be custodian of that same

Union Jack-draped branch of the weird and wonderful. Credit to all concerned for that - change, my dears, and not a moment too soon... that said, it continues to be a very broad church (much like our sceptred isle, now you come to think of it), the heart of which absolutely appealed to me as first a reader then a nervous writer looking for a gig - to be asked to put my two pennies worth into the *Blue Box Column* each month from the point at which fiction and fact meet and have a bash at each other is both a challenge and a pleasure. I can only hope the magazine you hold in your hand will one day appear in future 'greatest hits' lists many years from now.

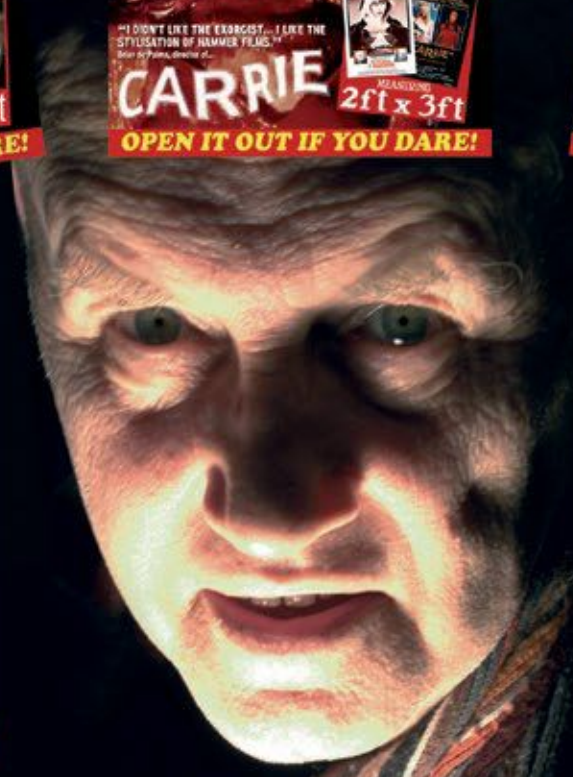
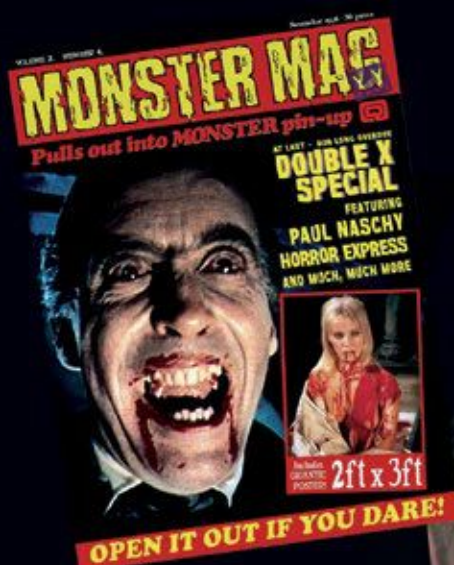
Whitney Scott Bain

One day, I ventured into a used bookstore that doesn't exist anymore and usually carried back issues of sci-fi and horror magazines for a dollar. Fishing through the box, I discovered STARBURST Issue 13. We never got UK magazines on the local stands or comic stores in my area. I had to have it! I had never heard of STARBURST before, but the cover image of *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* sold me on the spot, with additional articles on the art of *Space: 1999* and *The Omega Man*! How lucky I am to have found it and years later be writing articles and inspiring others for the longest running sci-fi/horror magazine in the world.

Here's to another 40 years of STARBURST - thank you all for reading and believing.



IT'S STILL 1977 AND LOOK WHO'S BACK!



THE WORLD'S FIRST FULL COLOUR HORROR FILMS MAGAZINE

...JUST WON'T STAY DEAD! Launched in 1973, its second issue was banned by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and every copy was destroyed (making it also the world's RAREST magazine!). But it survived this setback and kept on coming until 1976 when its editor found a new toy and launched House of Hammer. Well now it's risen from its grave and continued where it left off, with the original editor finally putting together the long-promised **Double X** issue AND a gap-filling English language printing of issue 2. And more besides (check out *The Hammer Lovers* main man Matt, left, modelling just one of the three posters in issue #20!). Join us on our magic journey... back to the 1970s!

Visit us on Facebook at: **MONSTER MAG**. Order online from: <http://dezskinn.com/quality-shop-1>
Or simply write to us at: **MONSTER MAG, 345 DITCHLING ROAD, BRIGHTON BN1 6JJ**

OPEN IT OUT IF YOU DARE!



MAKING HIS MARK

by Jordan Royce

As part of our 40th Anniversary celebrations, we'd like to give you an insight into an invaluable member of the team - Mark Reihill, who provides our stunning illustrated covers for the Collectors' Editions that are available to subscribers and those who buy online.

STARBURST: First off, a small introduction, tell us about some of your past work.

Mark Reihill: I'm a freelance illustrator, based in Belfast. I work in the field of advertising but also exhibit my work from time to time. Most of my artwork is for commercial and editorial clients; I have worked on a wide range of projects from packaging, storyboards and character design to branding, outdoor campaigns and album covers - for clients like Vodafone, Empire Magazine, Smithwick's, Jameson, Bushmills, Coca-Cola, and Usborne Publishing - and I am the cover artist for STARBURST Magazine. It was great to see the mag make a comeback, especially with fully illustrated covers.

I have also exhibited in official, fully-licensed shows with AMC for *The Walking Dead*, Fox for *American Horror Story*, and was one of the 50 artists hand-picked by CBS to celebrate *Star Trek's* 50th anniversary with a year-long, global art exhibition, *Star Trek: 50 Artists. 50 Years*.

So Mark, give us a little background as to what you do and how you do it, for the uninitiated...

I guess my official title would be 'Freelance Illustrator'. I work within the field of advertising, illustrating everything from magazine covers, storyboards, children's books, to character design, packaging and branding. I am a digital illustrator, which means 100% of my work is computer-based.

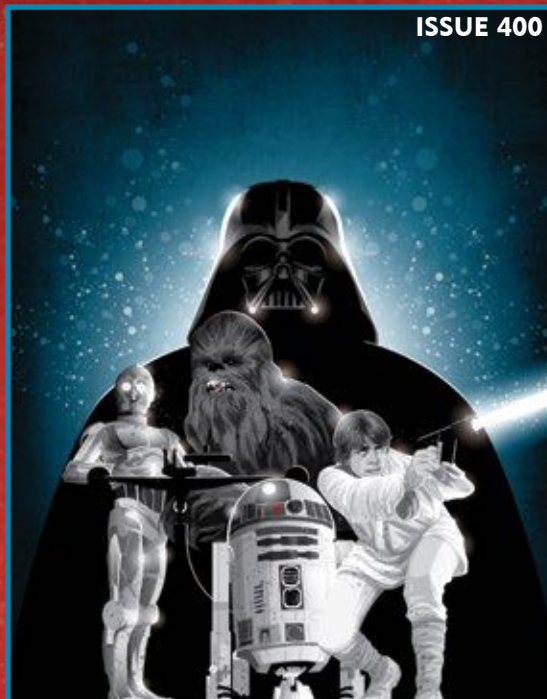
Why digital illustration? At what stage did you realise the mouse and trackpad was your weapon of choice and not the paintbrush and pen?

I wasn't always a digital artist. For years I was a 'traditional' illustrator using pen and ink, right up until my placement year (at uni), which I spent with an advertising agency. During this time, I learned several pieces of software. I was then able to use my newly acquired skills and apply them to illustration. For years, I used a combination of scanned, hand-drawn illustrations and digital software. However, thanks to hardware like Wacom's Cintiq and IntuosPro [drawing tablets], allowing the artist to draw directly onto the computer or screen, I now work 100% digitally. For me, this is a much more efficient way of working as it speeds up the process but retains that organic brushstroke you would get from pen and paper.

Where have your most exciting commissions come from? What part of your work gets you buzzing the most?

Most of my work comes from advertising agencies - here in Belfast, along with Dublin, London, and America. I also get a lot of work from social media - creative directors and clients will contact me directly, which is immediate and great, but it can be hard to fit a brief into 140 characters!

ISSUE 400



ISSUE 405

I get most excited about the 'bookends' of a project - the start, coming up with the concept, trying to answer the brief as best I can, and the end, then seeing the final illustration. That's not to say I don't enjoy the middle, the actual work. I love developing an illustration and watching it grow. Sometimes, it goes off in directions I hadn't intended - that's all part of the fun!

I really love doing any work for The Dead Rabbit. Based in New York, it's one of the most famous cocktail bars in the world. I illustrated pretty much everything for the bar - posters, prints - they have one cocktail menu each year and they're pretty much graphic novels! It's an incredible place and the owners are always pushing the boundaries creatively, which is great news to me as I get to draw some pretty amazing, intense, graphic and violent stuff!

Is there anyone - or anything - that has acted as a major influence to your work?

Like most creatives, I draw inspiration from the world around me - movies, music, people, and art inspire me. I love painters like Jackson Pollock, Robert McGinnis, and

ISSUE 411



ISSUE 418



ISSUE 420



ISSUE 408



Sebastian Krüger. I'm a huge comic book fan, so I look up to the greats like Jack Kirby, Gil Kane, and John Romita along with modern geniuses like Tim Sale, Greg Capullo, Mark Bagley, and Jim Lee.

Is being a digital illustrator in Ireland in 2016 a good thing? How is the scene for you at present?

It's an amazing thing! I am incredibly busy with a ton of projects that I am very excited about for both huge and local clients, and I have several exhibitions lined up this year, one in New York and two in LA. I have to say, since I went freelance in 2006, the work hasn't stopped. I am up to my ears with vectors, haha! The problem is having the discipline to say no. I hate turning down work, especially for new clients, but it's better to be honest and decline work than take it on, miss a deadline and let the client down. The creative industry is small (especially here in Northern Ireland) and the last thing you need is a reputation for missing deadlines.

How do you find working from a home studio? Are there pros and cons to working from home?

I work in a studio in Belfast two days a week and the rest from the home studio.

Pros: I can work as early or as late as required, I have all my home

comforts and I can play Led Zeppelin as loud as I like!

The cons, however, would be the lack of social interaction and not being able to bounce ideas off other creatives. That's why the Belfast studio is so beneficial - otherwise I'd be cooped up in my own studio 24/7 going crazy. "All work and no play makes..."

Can you give us an insight into some of the rarities and items of note around the studio? Do they provide inspiration or distraction?

I surround myself with things that inspire me - art books, graphic novels, Blu-rays, and games. I have a Jack Bauer figure pointing a gun at me from a shelf - this is to keep me from procrastinating! Jack can be very persuasive. The Hot Toys 1/6 scale Batman and Batpod are among my most prized possessions. The detail is mind-blowing!

Finally, do you have any exciting projects on the horizon?

There are lots of amazing projects coming up later this year - some exciting pieces, packaging, and magazine covers - but like most of my creative projects, I'm bound by a confidentiality agreement. Sorry!

Check out more about Mark's amazing work at markreihill.com and follow him on Twitter @markreihill.

ISSUE 427



ISSUE 429



ISSUE 439



EDITORS' FAVES

Issue 400

To celebrate the landmark Issue 400, I asked Mark to recreate and modernise the *Star Wars* cover of STARBURST Issue 1. Mark nailed it in his own inimitable style.

Issue 405

Great use of grayscale and red in this *Walking Dead* cover. Fantastic zombie, and offset nicely with a white background to make the blood pop.

Issue 408

More fantastic use of grayscale and red in this iconic portrait of Sir Christopher Lee in a role he came to hate - Count Dracula.

Issue 411

Who needs adverts on the back page when Mark can give you a wraparound cover featuring characters from *Avengers: Age of Ultron*? Check out that Hulkbuster!

Issue 418

Another iconic portrait, this time of Katniss from *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 2*. Great colours and Ms Lawrence never looked so good. *STARBURST Fact* - The official *Hunger Games* Twitter account took a shine to this and retweeted it to millions of followers - nice one Mark!

Issue 420

Out comes the grayscale to immortalise Mulder and Scully as the *X-Files* returned to our screens. The Smoking Man in white is a lovely touch.

Issue 427

The colours on this *Suicide Squad* cover are amazing. The Joker and Harley Quinn look fantastic. A superb image with bags of attitude.

Issue 429

Ever since being allowed to stay up late to watch that dodgy '70s TV movie, I have been a fan of *Doctor Strange*. Mark captures the essence of the character. Again, the use of colours and grayscale make for a dynamic image.

Issue 439

This cover caused a massive stir. Everyone loved what Mark did with Pennywise on the cover featuring the release of the remake of *IT*. Bright, big, and ballsy!

My Personal Favourite - Issue 385 (see opposite)

Gerry Anderson was a good friend to myself and the *Fab Café*. My business was in dire straits and he made a number of appearances that turned the corner for us. Without his help, I would not have been able to take over STARBURST when it's future was in the balance. I was very down when he passed away. Mark had already produced a *Dexter* cover for Issue 385. I rang him and asked if he could do another cover, one that featured Gerry, and I had an idea that some of his puppet creations should have their strings cut. Mark produced a cover that literally took my breath away when it arrived. He perfectly captured what I had in mind, and he also captured the essence of the man

that had done so much to help me when I was in a battle for survival. I heard off a number of people that when Issue 385 arrived they just stared for ages at this cover. I sent Gerry's son, Jamie, a few copies. He was really happy, and found it to be a touching tribute. Now that a few years have passed, I look at this cover and it does not make me sad, or melancholy, it brings a smile to my face. That is the power of a true artist.







TIME TO PLAY THE GAME!

BY JACK BOTTOMLEY

Join us as we take a look at
JUMANJI: WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE,
a film that has the unenviable task
of following up the beloved
Robin Williams-led '90s hit...



JUMANJI

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE



The death of Robin Williams in 2014 was the news that kept on hurting. It was an unexpected, tragic and just plain horrible loss of a beloved actor and comedian who was an explosion of charisma and improvised genius. From taking Disney's *Aladdin* and making it his own, to giving Spielberg's underrated *Hook* a joyful heartbeat, Williams was an actor who deserved far more praise than he received. Though a gifted comedian, he also gave some incredible performances outside of the comedy genre too, in far darker roles (*Insomnia*, *One Hour Photo*) and accomplished dramas (*Good Will Hunting*, *Dead Poets Society*). We mention this because back in 1995, director Joe Johnston helmed a feature based on Chris Van Allsburg's picture book, which boasted spectacular effects and game-based adventure. This film has since become a work of great affection and rolled its way into countless 'best of Robin Williams' movie lists over the years.

So, how on earth do you even start to remake a movie that, among many other fine moments, featured a jungle poacher chasing kids around a supermarket (that sounded less sinister in our heads), huge killer mosquitos, a rampaging tiger, killer plants, police car-wrecking monkeys and board gaming antics that make heated family *Monopoly* sessions seem relatively mild. Well, apparently you don't, as *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* is not a remake but - like this year's *Flatliners* (not the most flattering comparison we'll grant you) - is a sequel-cum-reboot, a rebootquel or seqboot if you will. Naturally, fans are unsure. But is this return to the world of *Jumanji* actually a revisit that we should be looking forward to? Well, join us as we take a look at what to expect from *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle*. Don your safari hats, have a weapon ready and should you get confined to the deadly jungles along the way, we promise we'll keep playing until one of us rolls 5 or 8!

Well, we say roll, but the game has certainly changed 20 years on from the ominous smoky letters and dice, as *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* updates the board game format (not that it needs sprucing up) to a video game that takes virtual reality to dangerous new levels of immersion. Set twenty years after the events of the first movie, four teenagers serving detention are forced to clean out their school's basement. There, they stumble upon *Jumanji*, which here is a different - but equally lethal - video game system and when these teens start playing, they are transported into the treacherous jungles of mystery (well, Hawaii) and take the guise of their chosen characters, as they journey through the game and desperately try to finish it and get out alive!

The updating of the format is not exactly surprising. *Jumanji* originally told the story of Alan Parish (Williams) as he was sucked into the game as a boy and was released years later as a man to continue playing and finish. The film placed themes of loss and appreciating your loved ones at the core of the exciting (and often rather scary) adventure. It was filled with - at that point - incredible effects that brought the fantastical elements of the story to life but it was in many senses a very traditional tale of morality, strength and overcoming obstacles no matter how great they are. Arguably the film was already updated adequately in Jon Favreau's spiritual sequel, the often overlooked but fun *Zathura: A Space Adventure* in 2005, which took the board gaming antics into deep space. However, this proper sequel, or rebootquel [let's not get bogged down with that again - Ed], goes one step further in revising the material for a modern audience comprised of gamers and tech-literate families and, like the original, looks to be carrying over the values of teamwork and resilience in an even bigger special effects showcase.

It also looks to have more than a hint of *Journey 2: The Mysterious Island* (which also starred Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson (do you need a CV here?!)) alongside Michael Caine of all people), the more-fun-than-it-had-any-right-to-be 2012 sequel to the 2008 Brendan

Fraser-led 3D retelling of *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, about it with its jungle setting, big screen CG thrills and array of dangerous creatures (albeit real world ones). Unlike the original, the action this time actually takes place inside the world of *Jumanji* as opposed to outside of it and the footage thus far certainly has played on that heavily. Featuring some real hungry hungry hippos, helicopter chases, explosive action, Jaguar-shaped mountains, rhino stampedes and a jungle arrival reminiscent of the opening of *Predators*, this is certainly a different take on things.

Chances are the movie will take a lighter approach to the material and substitute the drama of the original for comedy. And the video gaming avatar element is being used as the root of that comedy from the looks of it, with the four teens being transformed into a very diverse and eclectic group of characters. Each exhibit different adventure game hero tropes and traits that contrast with each teen, making for some drastic role reversals. Alex Wolff (*My Big Fat Greek Wedding 2*) is Spencer Miller, a nerdy gamer at an immediate experience advantage in this game-based predicament, especially when his in-game avatar is Dwayne Johnson's muscle bound adventurer Dr Smolder Bravestone (whatta name!). Likewise, Morgan Turner (*The Sisterhood Of Night*) as bookworm Martha Schwartz is about to get a whole new hands-on take on adventure, as she takes the form of Karen Gillan's (*Guardians of the Galaxy*'s Nebula and former *Doctor Who* companion) Lara Croft-inspired commando character Ruby Roundhouse. Madison Iseman (*Tales of Halloween*), meanwhile, is at the other end of the high school spectrum, as she plays Bethany White, the girl everyone wants to be and popular cheerleader, who is about to see things from a very different perspective in the jungles of *Jumanji*, as she takes the form and gender of cartographer Professor Shelly Oberon, played by Jack Black (*School of Rock*, *Tropic Thunder*). And finally, like Bethany, Ser'Darius Blain's (2011's *Footloose*) character Anthony Johnson, the school jock, is getting a geekier avatar as zoologist Franklin Finbar, played by Kevin Hart (Johnson's *Central Intelligence* co-star).

Rounding off this charismatic cast is Nick Jonas (yes, from the Jonas Brothers... no please... come back!) as *Jumanji* adventurer Alex, and Bobby Cannavale (*Spy*, *Ant-Man*) as the film's villain John Hardin, who will assuredly have his work cut out to match Jonathan Hyde's antagonist in the original. Speaking of the original, rumours are also circulating that - **Possible Spoiler Alert** - Robin Williams may return as Alan Parrish via archive footage. Whatever the case, Dwayne Johnson has stated that the film is intended as a tribute to Williams and the cast certainly seem to have great reverence for the original (Gillan especially) and have expressed desire to do it justice.

As previously mentioned, this film is a lot different and seems to mix in more straight-up action comedy beats with the adventure; hardly a surprise considering director Jake Kasdan's recent work on the big screen (*Bad Teacher*, *Sex Tape*) and on TV (*New Girl*). The film is written by Chris McKenna and Erik Sommers (*The Lego Batman Movie*, *Spider-Man: Homecoming*), Scott Rosenberg (*Con Air*) and Jeff Pinkner (*The Dark Tower*) and whatever the results of their combined minds, this certainly looks fun at least. Whether it can meet the expectations placed upon it, however, is anyone's guess. One thing is for sure, though; we're ready to be welcomed to this jungle, as we certainly love fun and games! *Jumanji* is back! So let the drums beat (assuming Henry Jackman's score will keep that audible motif) and the rhinos charge, as *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* stampedes into cinemas this Christmas!

You can be warped into **JUMANJI: WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE** when it arrives in UK cinemas from December 20th.



This month, fearless spelunker Michael Coldwell grabs a helmet, adjusts his rope and tackle and confronts the brutal nihilism of *THE DESCENT*...

HORROR
OBSCURA

DEEP DREAD





You really have to wonder at some people's definition of 'leisure pursuit'. Exploring caves is fine and dandy, we've all done that on our hols, but proper potholing down into freezing, pitch-black caverns hundreds of feet below ground requires a special kind of steely nerve. Physical strength and agility are must-haves, but you also need a clear head and quick wits to ensure you're ready to take decisive action if anything goes wrong with your rope or harness. Then there's that squeaking support hook you've just hammered into a crack in the rock above your head that's now bearing your entire body weight as you dangle a thousand feet over a terrifying sheer drop into the unknown. You don't get that at Butlins (no wonder they're down to just three resorts in the UK - Bognor, Minehead, and Skegness to be precise).

One thing even the best cavers don't expect to encounter in the timeless bowels of the earth is a local population of pale, dead-eyed, cannibal skinheads (for that, you probably would be better off visiting Bognor, Minehead, or Skegness). But that's the savage reception awaiting six adventuring girlfriends who take themselves off on a North Carolina potholing weekend in director Neil Marshall's UK horror movie *The Descent*, released to considerable acclaim in 2006. Their expedition into Chattanooga Park in the Appalachian

Mountains (very convincingly realised in Ashridge Forrest in Buckinghamshire and on studio sets at Pinewood) takes place under a cowl of sadness, exactly a year after one of their number, Sarah Carter (Shauna Macdonald), experienced a horrendous car accident that killed her husband and daughter. Did we mention this wasn't a comedy? It's not a comedy.

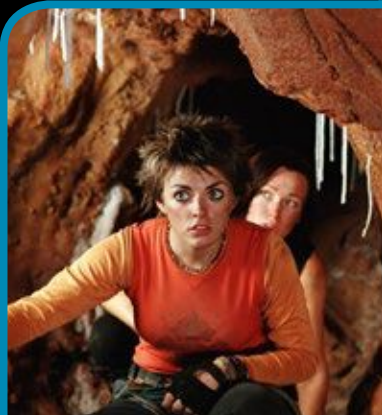
To really hammer in that point, the film begins with a joltingly brutal flashback to Sarah's horror crash that will have the DIY enthusiasts among you doubling-up the bindings on your roof rack the next time you pop down to B&Q for some copper piping. The next thing Sarah knows, she's awoken in a rather grim old hospital, screaming in realisation of her predicament. It's a scream we will come to know very well over the next 95 minutes.

One year on, and Sarah meets up with her friends at an *Evil Dead*-style cabin in the woods. Here, the sextet is completed by Sam (UK telly mainstay MyAnna Buring), Beth (Alex Reid), Rebecca (Saskia Mulder) plus punky newcomer and self-proclaimed 'mentalist' Holly (Nora-Jane Noone). Leading their expedition underground is strident alpha female Juno (Natalie Mendoza), who may well be harbouring a shameful secret involving Sarah's late husband's trouser

area. There will be some serious 'to be continued' between Juno and Sarah.

Soon, the gang commence their spelunking (that's a word, it means 'cave exploring'), plunging into the darkness of a deep cavern Juno has selected. While inching themselves through a particularly claustrophobic orifice, their exit is blocked by a rockfall. No problem though - experienced cavers always inform the authorities where they're going, so they'll all be rescued soon enough, right? Wrong! Juno has been economical with the truth in more ways than one; not only is this a completely uncharted cave system, she's told the park rangers they were visiting another cave entirely. So - bugger! - no one knows where the hell they are. Nice one, sister. All the girls can do now is keep venturing on their current downward trajectory, squeezing themselves through ever-more dangerous gullies in the hope they'll eventually find a way back up to the surface.

When they come to the inevitable giant gaping chasm and begin carefully winching themselves across it, Becca spies a rusty rope hook pre-hammered into the rock that's at least a hundred years old. So, what befell the people who first came here? The answer comes looming out of the dark





soon enough in the form of the Crawlers - horrendous, humanoid nasties with a taste for tender flesh. Blind of sight and pure of instinct, their domain is a nightmarish carpet of their victims' bones. The scene is set for a relentless, desperate battle for survival in the darkness...

A drinking game to spot all the genre references Neil Marshall has coded into *The Descent* might be fun at first but there are so many of them we'd advise close medical supervision and a stomach pump to hand just in case (our Assistant Editor Martin Unsworth will rent you his for half price if you book it at least a week in advance). From the visceral jump-deaths of the *Alien* series and *Predator* to the bizarre culture shocks of *The Hills Have Eyes* and *Deliverance* to the tragic emotional trauma of *Don't Look Now*, the film deftly riffs on the classics while keeping enough tricks of its own in reserve to have you grinding your teeth in anticipation of the next nasty jolt. Quite a feat, that.

It's also to the film's credit that it doesn't overplay the all-female angle. If you come to *The Descent* expecting a meta-textual redefinition of the horror film through a feminist gauze, you're better off watching *Aliens* again. Because thanks in no small part to Sigourney Weaver's pioneering work,

the action-horror gender rulebook has been re-drawn to the point that it may only occur to you afterwards that, bar the opening scene, there are no conventional male characters in it at all.

Unconventional male characters? That would be the Crawlers (there are female ones too, we assume). Truly nightmarish demons of the dark, they resemble Gollum's full-size cousins, but are more effective for being played by actors in costumes and make-up rather than rendered with tiresome mo-cap CGI. No offence, Andy Serkis, but this is one gig we're glad you didn't get. Neil Marshall envisaged the Crawlers as cavemen who never found a way out, evolving over thousands of years to become pale, blind savages. Despite only a few onscreen hints to their origin, we instinctively understand that they are not really monsters at all, which, like Wes Craven's savage predators in *The Hills Have Eyes* and the tragic cannibal in the London Underground classic *Death Line*, only makes them more horrific as a concept.

As the haunted Sarah, Shauna Macdonald has the scream queen toolkit down pat. Tortured by survivor's guilt and paranoid around Juno, the darkness drives her ever further into hallucination and mania. By the final act, she's tearing about like the missing

link between Marilyn Burns from *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and Sissy Spacek from *Carrie*. Rather pleasingly, when she's not streaked in blood and sweat, Macdonald bears a striking resemblance to Catriona MacColl, Lucio Fulci's leading lady of choice during his early '80s imperial phase of ocular violence and maggots.

Sharing lead duties as hard-ass expedition leader and de facto villain Juno, Natalie Mendoza plays up the nervous tension with Sarah, superficially keen for the trip to repair their relationship but unable to paper over her own duplicitous streak or a thirst for danger that ends up pitching the whole gang into the Seventh Circle of Hell. Her full-blown *Terminator*-mode in the final act gets the pulse racing and brings a redemption of sorts, but let's face it, with friends like Juno, who needs enemies?

The ensemble supporting cast have their work cut out trying to distinguish their characters in the darkness, but all deliver winning turns that make the necessary business of getting gorily picked off one by one by savage cavemen far more emotionally resonant than in your average gorefest. We know the territory; it's not so much *will* they die as *when* and *how* nastily. Inevitably, there's a tonal gear change halfway through *The Descent* when their low-





key naturalism is supplanted by the broader dramatic clichés we expect when death is a sudden possibility. But, like the crew of the Nostromo in *Alien*, because the character groundwork has been skilfully laid from the start, each time fate does come calling, there is a genuine sense of loss amid all the snapping of bones and ripping of flesh.

This was Marshall's second feature following *Dog Soldiers* (2002), his bonkers tale of werewolves vs. squaddies in rural Wales. He's since directed *Doomsday* (2008) and the Michael Fassbender vehicle *Centurion* (2010), but *The Descent* remains the critical high watermark of his movie career to date. More recently, he's forged a path directing high-end genre TV shows, including well-regarded episodes of *Game of Thrones*, *Westworld*, and *Hannibal*. Marshall is currently lined up to direct episodes of next year's reboot of *Lost in Space* before returning to the big screen for yet another reboot - this time of the *Hellboy* franchise, though not, sad to say, with Ron Perlman returning to the title role (and the Perlmanverse is a sadder place because of it). Jumping ship from TV to cinema franchises isn't always plain sailing, of course - just ask Marshall's fellow *Game of Thrones* alumnus Alan Taylor, who underwhelmed with *Thor: The Dark World* and *Terminator Genisys* before hungrily re-attaching himself to the *GoT* teat

like a ravenous infant. But to us, Neil Marshall and *Hellboy* sounds like a good match, so fingers crossed he won't need to 'do an Alan' soon afterwards.

The Descent certainly did the business on release, making \$57 million worldwide from a modest production budget of £3.5 million. Far be it from us to get snippy about UK-centric horror films, but we suspect a major factor in its success was the nifty trick it pulls off making us think we're watching an American movie. The international cast, very convincing location work, excellent studio cave sets and a sprinkling of American vehicles all add texture to the illusion, but the real reason is Neil Marshall's genre-savvy direction, born of his love of horror films and innate understanding of how the likes of Carpenter, Raimi, and Craven twiddled the nerve of audiences worldwide. His flair for action is just as vital - that precarious, chasm-crossing scene will have beads of sweat jumping off your forehead, while the Crawler attacks - a blizzard of savage movements and quick edits - are kinetically brilliant moments. Visually, Marshall and cinematographer Sam McCurdy achieve wonders. Using the pitch darkness of the cave as their base canvas, they paint the screen with probing torchlights and the eerie glow of red and green flares before giving it over completely to the full-on

hallucinatory assault of the final act.

It all adds up to a low-budget independent horror movie that looks amazing and lacks for nothing. It's a good job it wasn't made twenty years earlier, as it would probably have suffered the indignity of being a Golan/Globus Cannon production with all the grotty association that went with it. But by the time *The Descent* was released in 2006, thanks in no small part to the prior success of *The Blair Witch Project*, the 'low budget horror' stigma was in the process of being dispelled. Now, in 2017, the tables have turned so profoundly that it's genuinely surprising when a major studio horror movie delivers anything close to the ferocious energy of independent gems like this.

Eleven years on from its release, we're pleased to report that the *The Descent* has lost none of its power. A slick and brutally efficient sucker punch of contemporary horror shot through with classic influences, you'll need a stiff drink or three afterwards to stand any chance of getting to sleep. Pour us one while you're about it, would you? Down the hatch...

You can enter the world of *THE DESCENT* when it screens on Horror Channel on November 25th. Sky 319, Virgin 149, Freeview 70, Freesat 138.



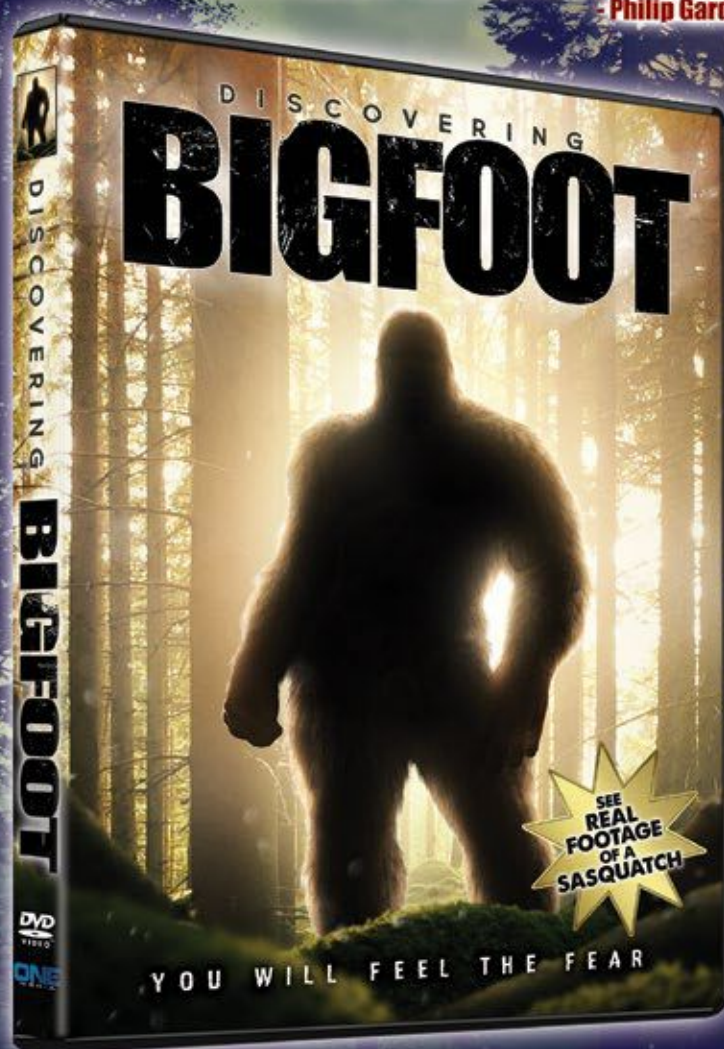
DISCOVERING BIGFOOT

"I AM FIRMLY CONVINCED THESE ARE FILMED PORTRAITS OF THE SASQUATCH FACE."

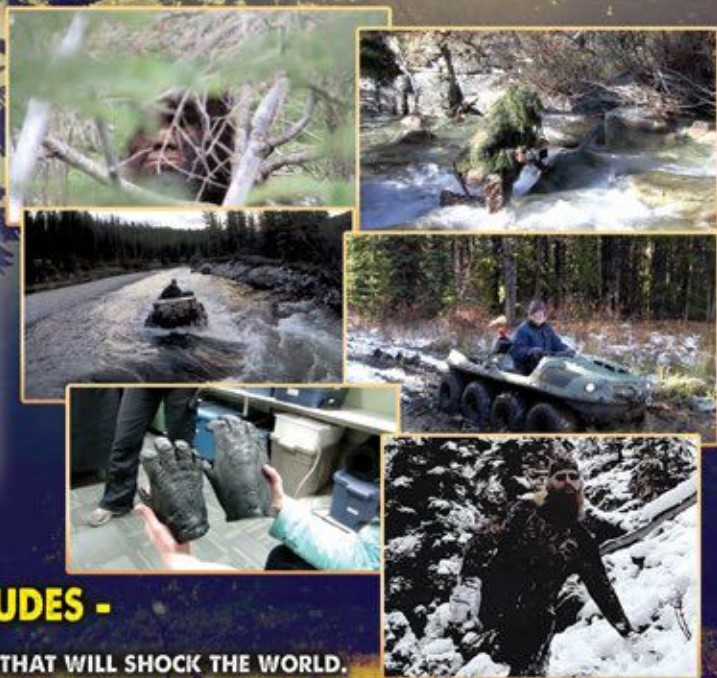
- Wildlife Biologist, John Bindernagel, PhD

"UTTERLY RIVETING FOOTAGE AND TESTIMONY."

- Philip Gardiner, Award Winning Director of "A False Reality"



DISCOVERING BIGFOOT IS THE FIRST FEATURE FILM DOCUMENTARY WITH REAL LIVE INTERACTION BETWEEN A BIGFOOT CREATURE, WILDERNESS EXPERTS, PHD'S AND OTHER WORLD RENOWNED EXPERTS AND RESEARCHERS OF THE BIGFOOT ENIGMA. EXPERIENCE THREE INCREDIBLE DAYS IN THE FIELD WITH BIGFOOT RESEACHERS, TODD STANDING AND RENOWNED EXPERT PROFESSOR DR. JEFF MELDRUM AS THEY ENCOUNTER A REAL LIVE SASQUATCH.



THIS UNPRECEDENTED FEATURE FILM INCLUDES -

- NEVER BEFORE SEEN, EXTRAORDINARY SASQUATCH FOOTAGE THAT WILL SHOCK THE WORLD.**
- A TERRIFYING NIGHT TIME ALTERCATION DEEP IN THE WINTER FORESTS OF THE CANADIAN WILDERNESS BETWEEN TODD STANDING AND 3 SASQUATCH CREATURES.**
- FIVE NEVER BEFORE SEEN VIDEO ENCOUNTERS WITH THE SASQUATCH SPECIES AND OVERVIEW OF THE LIFE AND DEATH STRUGGLE THAT WAS NECESSARY TO ACQUIRE THEM.**



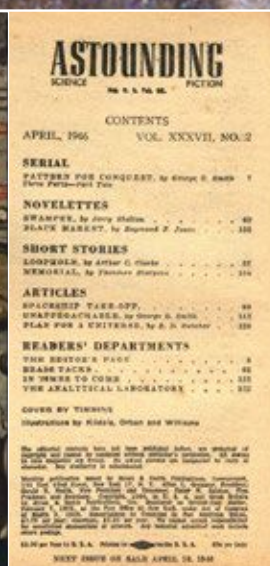
WWW.REALITY-ENTERTAINMENT.COM

A LIFE'S ODYSSEY

By Ed Fortune



ARTHUR C. CLARKE's name is synonymous with science and science fiction. He left this Earth in 2008, and December 16th, 2017 would have been his 100th birthday. His work includes the novels 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY and RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA as well as a great many documentaries and works on the subject of space and science. Let's take a quick look at the great man's long list of achievements...



Arthur Charles Clarke grew up in Somerset, England, spending his youth stargazing and reading American science fiction anthologies; this would form the backbone of his later work. While in these formative years, he contributed articles to a magazine for astronomy enthusiasts and was a significant force within those groups. During World War Two, he served as a radar specialist in the RAF, and when the war ended, he went on to earn a first class degree in Physics and Mathematics. By 1946, he was the chairman of the British Interplanetary Society and his work on geostationary satellites contributed to their development as a telecommunications technology.

All of this seems rather matter of fact in a way, but it's important to remember that Clarke's contribution to science fiction was deeply embedded in the world of science and reason. To this day, we describe the genre in terms of hard and soft science, and Clarke is the rock upon which the hard stuff is founded. Clarke is one third of the 'Big Three' of the genre, the others being Isaac Asimov and Robert Heinlein. Clarke and Heinlein shared a common vision but disagreed over politics; specifically, the Strategic Defence Initiative that Clarke testified against. Heinlein felt the world needed orbital weapons platforms, while Clarke disagreed. Asimov and Clarke maintained a friendly rivalry and even had a 'treaty'. When either

was asked who was best, both would say Clarke was the best science fiction writer and Asimov was the best science writer.

Clarke's first professionally published work was a story called *Loophole*, which featured Martians worrying about mankind's rapid advancement into the stars. It was picked up by the legendary John W. Campbell Jr, who published it in his magazine *Astounding Science Fiction*. Later that year, the same magazine would publish *Rescue Party*, a tale about aliens rescuing mankind from the death of our sun. Despite the chronology, Campbell actually purchased *Rescue Party* first. If the editor's name rings a bell, it may be because he has a prize for Best New Writer named after him as part of the Hugo Awards and he wrote the story *Who Goes There?*, which was adapted into the film *The Thing*.

Clarke would go on to write many short stories. Between 1946 and 1951, he had 19 stories published followed by *Against the Fall of Night*, his first novel. Although it first appeared as a novella in *Startling Stories* back in 1948, it was expanded to novel length.

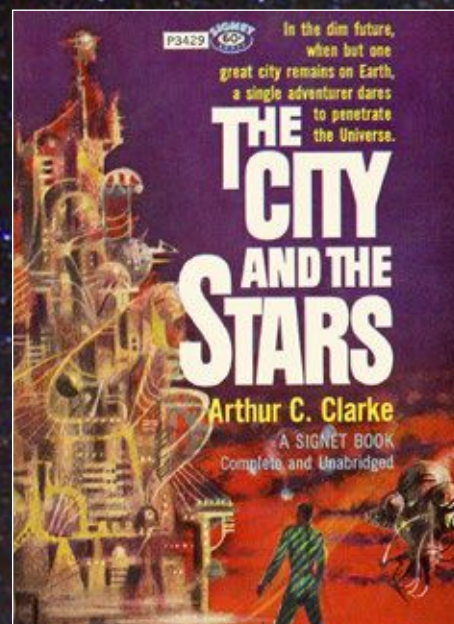
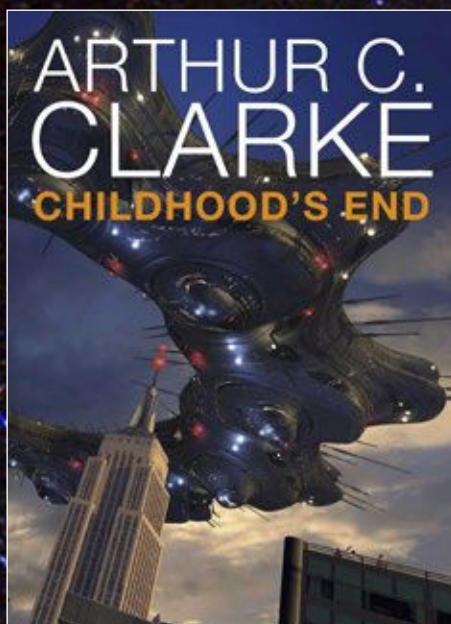
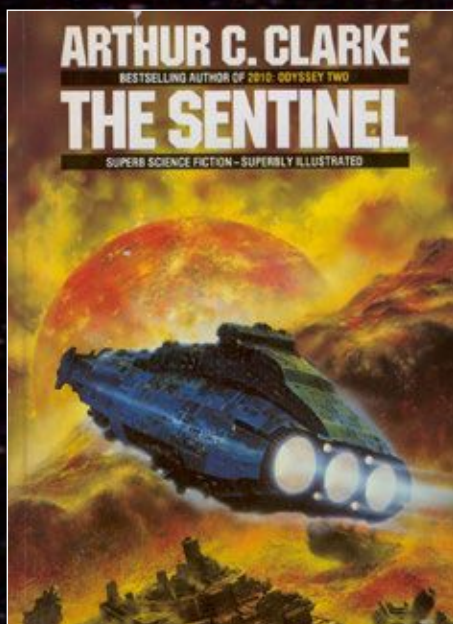
1948 was also the year he wrote *The Sentinel*, a story that would change Clarke's career and take him from an editor of scientific journals to the literary powerhouse he is today. Originally submitted to a competition by the BBC (who promptly rejected it), *The Sentinel* was the story that would be further developed

into *2001: A Space Odyssey*. It can be seen as a blueprint for many of Clarke's work as it features a technologically advanced but still-prejudiced mankind being confronted by a superior alien intelligence. This is the inherent conflict in much of his fiction, using science and 'the other' to throw a harsh light on the limitations of mankind. Other common themes in his work would be the evolution of mankind into higher beings and the concept of telepathy.

Clarke produced a great many short stories throughout his career - rather than go through all of them one at a time, we advise you pick up *The Collected Stories of Arthur C. Clarke*. It's about 1000 pages long so it'll keep you busy for a while. And if needs be, it's thick enough to stun an alien should it decide to abduct you.

Notable novels include 1953's *Childhood's End*, a book about a 'peaceful' alien invasion in which an advanced civilisation comes to Earth to improve mankind's lot. Though their goals are ultimately benign, it is a tale of stagnation and cultural collapse. There have been many attempts to turn this novel (and its two sequels) into other media, though the most recent example is the 2013 Syfy channel mini-series.

1953's *The City and the Stars* is one of Clarke's most rewritten pieces, going through multiple iterations before hitting its final



form. Set a billion years in the future, it's the tale of a chap called Alvin, who lives in the city of Diaspar. The city is run by a being called the Central Computer and most humans refuse to go outside the city walls. Alvin discovers that there are other cities (and indeed, other wonders) and goes exploring. It's a classic bit of science fiction from a Golden Age of sci-fi, and a firm introduction to not only Clarke's work, but '50s sci-fi in general.

The Hugo Award-winning *The Fountains of Paradise* came out in 1979 and is about the development of a space elevator. It's perhaps one of the heavier 'science over science fiction' works, but still notable for being a thrilling read filled with exciting ideas.

1986's *Songs of Distant Earth* is an epic tale about the fate of mankind and the end of all things. It's set in a utopian colony; Earth's Sun has long since gone nova and humanity has changed greatly. It explores apocalyptic, religious, and utopian concepts and also expands on how space travel would change civilisation.

Rendezvous with Rama is a tale of exploration and first contact, and asks what would happen should a massive alien probe come to our solar system. It's a thrilling read that won pretty much every award going and should be on your shelf. David Fincher and Morgan Freeman have been trying to make this one into a movie for many years. The

book came out in 1973, it's been more than 40 years. It's about time, surely?

1993's *The Hammer of God* is about a world-ending asteroid heading toward Earth. We've made it to Mars, and yet the attempt to avert the apocalypse is still fraught with problems. It features a space-faring and fairly open-minded humanity, but one that still can't get its act together even when threatened by extinction.

The story behind *2001: A Space Odyssey* is a long and rather sticky one. After producing *Dr Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, director Stanley Kubrick wanted to create 'the proverbial good science fiction movie'. Clarke was the obvious choice for a collaboration, despite concerns that he was a recluse. Kubrick was delighted to discover an engaged and enthusiastic novelist, and the two settled on a story of space exploration set in the near future. Clarke sold the rights for *The Sentinel* and *Encounter in the Dawn* to Kubrick. The latter story would form the famous 'apes' scene that opens the movie.

The two creative engines didn't work terribly well together. The novel was meant to come out before the screenplay, although that didn't happen. This is, in hindsight, a good thing. Though the movie is considered a classic of cinema, much of Clarke's contribution was left on the cutting room floor. Clarke didn't

even see the entire movie during the premiere as he left during the intermission, visibly upset that the film has deviated so much from the original vision. The book contains a much clearer vision of the story. The two are a classic example of how the book can be so different than the film, with the latter communicating through mystery, music and emotional visuals, whereas the former sets it all out in more comprehensive terms.

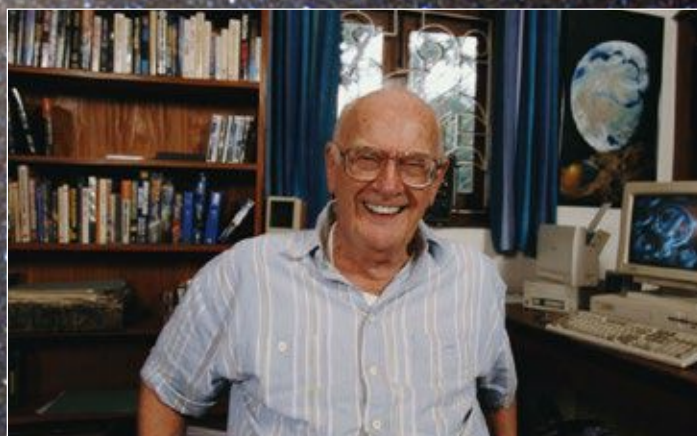
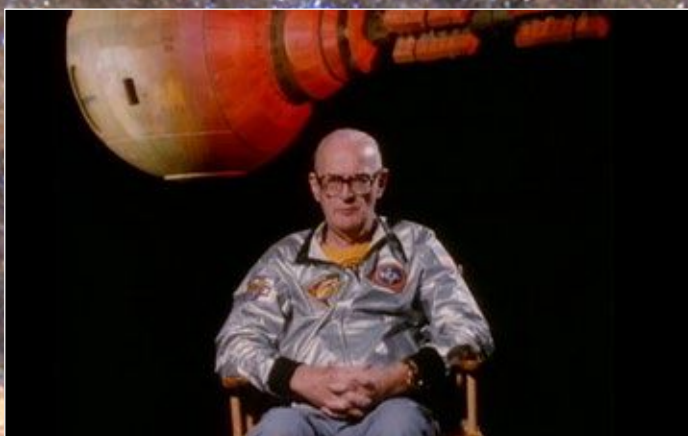
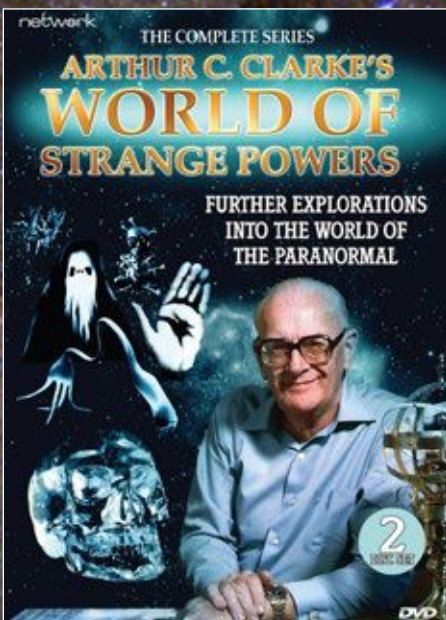
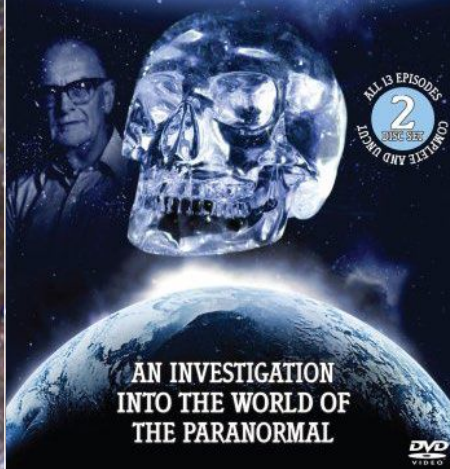
As an interesting side-note, as the movie was gearing up for its release, astrophysicist Jocelyn Bell Burnell announced that regular pulses of what could be communications transmissions had been discovered amongst the stars. Clarke was interviewed many times about this and it's clear that while he told people not to get too excited by this phenomena, he was rather excited by it himself. Especially as it was a most timely discovery in regards to the movie and novel, them being about distant alien life. Of course, these signals would turn out to be Pulsars, a naturally occurring stellar phenomena.

It didn't hurt the genre's cause that Clarke was the chap the media turned to when it came to all things space-related. This would ultimately lead to Clarke being one of the CNN commentators on the Apollo programme. The fame of *2001* especially inspired NASA to call the command module of Apollo 13 'Odyssey', after the full title of the book.

An epic drama of
adventure and exploration



ARTHUR C. CLARKE'S
MYSTERIOUS WORLD



The 2001 Mars Odyssey probe would also be named for Clarke. This would be one of many honours heaped upon him. Clarke was heavily decorated during his career, with not only awards but also bestowed the CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) in 1989 for his 'services to the British cultural interests in Sri Lanka' and was made a Knight Bachelor in 2000 for 'services to literature'.

Slightly younger fans will remember Clarke from his 1980s TV show, *Arthur C. Clarke's Mysterious World*. *Mysterious World* was introduced by Clarke in short sequences filmed at his home in Sri Lanka, and the premise of the show was to explain how amazing the natural world really is, whilst debunking several 'mysteries' (and exploring things we as yet don't understand). The show split mysteries into three kinds, aping the 'close encounters' popular amongst ufologists. *Mysteries of the First Kind* are things that our ancestors didn't understand but we now do, such as solar eclipses. *Mysteries of the Second Kind* discussed phenomena that we were in the process of understanding, such as Stonehenge or sea serpent sightings. *The Third Kind* were truly mysterious phenomena such as rains of frogs. The show had a massive cultural impact, introducing Fortean and the academic exploration of mystery to a massive audience. Clarke would host two other shows in 1985 and 1994, along similar themes.

Clarke's influence continues to this day, not just due to his vast body of work; Clarke's legacy includes the Serendip Foundation, which is dedicated to the promotion of science fiction literature, its importance in popular culture and its value as a site for serious academic interest. It primarily does this through the Clarke Award, though it has also supported the small press, conventions, and workshops. The first Clarke Award was presented in 1987 to Margaret Atwood for *The Handmaid's Tale*. Just in case you were in any doubt about that book being science fiction.

Neil Gaiman was a judge for the Clarke Award in the '90s. In his introductory speech, he said "All awards are weird but some awards are weirder than others, and there was always a particular oddity to the Arthur C. Clarke Award that, in the beginning, made people talk about it and, later, made the same people respect it... the Clarke Award is, I suspect, ultimately about bridge-building, which may be one reason why it is, although a British award, recognised and respected internationally. The Arthur C. Clarke Award is the award that the world of SF offers, each year, to the world outside as an example both of what SF is and what it can be."

Tom Hunter, Clarke Award Director, said "For all his achievements and accolades - that prediction about satellites, that cinematic masterpiece with Kubrick, etc. - Sir Arthur wished most of all to be remembered as a

writer. I think that wish has been well and truly granted, so I hope it's okay that I pay tribute instead to the ongoing contribution he's made to science fiction via the award that continues in his name. SF is richer not just for the award, but for the fact that it refuses (maybe politely declines, that's more Arthur's style) to offer up one single, easy definition of what science fiction can or should be. Instead we have a definition of our genre that plays on one of Arthur's own most famous maxims, 'the only way to know the limits of the possible is by going beyond them into the impossible.' Sir Arthur always wanted to be remembered as a writer, and like all writers he knew the importance of not placing a limit on our imaginations."

Following Clarke's death on March 19th, 2008, Michael Moorcock said in an obituary: "In the 1950s, I'd go out drinking with his boyfriend. We met his protégés, western and eastern, and their families: people who had only the most generous praise for his kindness. Self-absorbed he might be, and a teetotaler, but an impeccable gent through and through. He had absolutely unshakeable (and why not?) faith in his own visions. After all, SatCom was by no means his only accurate prediction. He retained a faith in the power of reason and science to cure our ills."

Without doubt, science fiction - both hard and soft - would not be the same without Arthur C. Clarke's influence. We salute you, Sir!



**NOT JUST A
SIDEKICK**

Words: Andrew Pollard



Holy interview time, Batman! Following the return of Adam West and Burt Ward's Dynamic Duo in last year's animated *BATMAN: RETURN OF THE CAPED CRUSADERS*, there now comes a follow-up in the form of *BATMAN VS. TWO-FACE*. Recorded before the sad passing of the iconic West this June, the sequel sees William Shatner join the action as the nefarious Harvey Dent. To coincide with the film's release, we were lucky enough to catch up with the legendary BURT WARD to discuss playing the Boy Wonder once more, his thoughts on Shatner's Duplicitous DA, what it was like to have fame thrust upon him at such a young age, his thoughts on how the animated Batman features can still continue despite the tragic passing of Adam West, and a whole lot more.

STARBURST: How was it to return to the fold with last year's *Return of the Caped Crusaders* and now *Batman vs. Two-Face*, and do you still get the same kick out of playing Dick Grayson/Robin?

Burt Ward: Well, let me tell you, this movie is so incredibly spectacular. Last year's movie was very good, it got tremendous reviews, but this is like a warp speed advancement. Much wilder, much bigger, everything - it is a mindblower! The people who have seen it, the reaction has just been unbelievable. I get emails from people saying, "This is the greatest animated Batman we've ever seen, period!"

With the recording process, did you get to record as an ensemble or was it all done on an individual basis?

No, it was recorded individually. I came in just as Adam was finishing. In other words, they have you one after another, but they need to have it absolutely without any other dialogue over an actor's performance; we had to be absolutely clean. That was how it was recorded most of the time.

One of the big talking points about the picture is William Shatner coming on board as Harvey Dent/Two-Face. How great of a fit was he for that role?

He is so unbelievable. First of all, he's an amazing actor. But the job that he did as Two-Face and Harvey Dent - the alternate identity - it was nothing less than spectacular. I thought he was a great actor, but what he did with this was out of the stratosphere. In my opinion, he was absolutely fantastic. At the world premiere at New York Comic Con, there was a standing ovation, cheering, and screaming after the movie. We did a panel and I sat next to him, and that man has an incredibly sharp wit. He is so quick, he is razor-sharp, hilarious and funny. The two of us were teasing each other. I had no idea how sharp

this man was. He's an incredible actor and just an absolute delight to work with.

The role of Robin was your very first acting gig, but did you ever imagine that *Batman* would become so incredibly successful and that, as a result, you would be thrust into the public spotlight so much?

Nobody knew when we went into it, we were a mid-season replacement for the ABC network. Nobody knew how successful or unsuccessful it was going to be. The opening night, they had a 55 share. That meant that 55% of all televisions in North America - that includes the United States, Mexico, and Canada - 55% were watching *Batman*, and the other 45% was spread out

between all kinds of other networks and local and regional channels. This was the equivalent of a bigger audience than the Super Bowl. That's how huge it was!

Having landed the Robin role at just 19, how was it dealing with that huge level of instant fame at such a young age?

For me, because I was a young actor, I had not been rejected for any other roles. I just had a wonderful open attitude. I didn't think I'd change, as I was the same person with or without the costume on. I was amazed how people just went bananas. You had kids who were running around with bath towels around their necks held together with clothespins, jumping off their couches.



You had the adults that were just crazy over *Batman* because of the nostalgia, the comic books. And then you had that audience that no networks could get at the time - that was the teenagers and college kids. They didn't want to watch TV at that time because it wasn't cool. But *Batman*? Oh, they needed to see it because of the insinuation and the highly suggestive moves we made - which, of course, got us into trouble with the censors every other week - but nevertheless, they loved it. We had something for everybody.

Even to this day, people still clamour to not just see Batman and Robin, but to see Adam and yourself as those characters. Why do you think that is?

The reason is because they were so affected as a child. If you're in someone's living room every week, twice a week, doing things that every kid - who are now adults - would have given their eye-teeth to do... riding in the Batmobile, climbing walls, fighting heinous villains, 'ZAPS!' and 'POWS!', colours, and music! It was just so overwhelming, it caught the world by surprise.

With Robin, that's one of those roles where it can sometimes be hard for an actor to be seen as anything but that character. Once *Batman* came to an end in 1968, did you find that you were typecast and that people would always offer you roles which were Robin-lite?

What happened was, when I was selected for the role there were 1,100 other young actors that had been interviewed. 1,100! That's pretty stiff competition. The executive producer came to me and said, "Burt, would you like to know why we picked you to play Robin?" I said, "Yes sir, I would." He said, "In our mind, forgetting television, if there ever really was a Robin for real then we think personally you'd be it. So we don't want you to act, we want you to be yourself. Be Burt and be enthusiastic." And that's what I did for 120 episodes. What you see with the jumping over the door to the Batmobile, jumping over the door getting out, clenching my hand into my fist - all of those mannerisms, they were mine. Nobody told me to do that, I did that myself because the directors and the producers were so

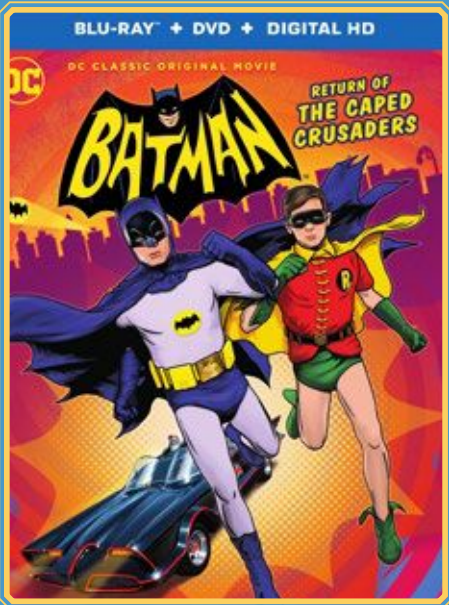


worried about all of those incredible effects that were giving us nightmares to put together that they left Adam and I alone. We got to do what we wanted to do!

Of course, Adam tragically passed away earlier this year. Cesar Romero, Burgess Meredith, and Frank Gorshin have all not been with us for many years now, yet Joker, Penguin, and Riddler replacements were brought in for these two recent *Batman* animated efforts. Do you think it would be at all possible to do another animated feature without Adam, though?

Absolutely! I will go one step further, it's possible they'll have Adam. Not exactly like you would think, but it's possible. Remember, all of those 120 episodes, all of that dialogue was recorded, and so many things could be reassembled and put together from that show. I don't know what the future's going to hold, I don't want to speak out of turn, but I can tell you that if this film's successful, this will not be the end of *Batman* animated features. This will be a new beginning.

Over the past several decades, you've



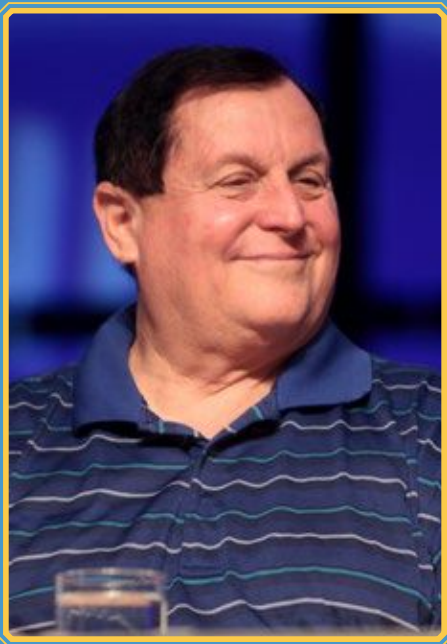
dedicated yourself to creating a revolutionary dog food that is geared to extending the lifespan of man's best friend. Dubbed 'half the price, twice the life', what can you tell us about *Gentle Giants*?

We've found a way to double and triple the lifespan of dogs. We have dogs living as long as 27 years! Giant breeds as well as small breeds. Dogs that only live five or six years living into their late twenties. We've devoted the last 23 years of our life and millions of our own dollars to develop the technology. It works beautifully. You can read about it on our website gentlegiantsdogfood.com. And by the way, it's coming to the UK!

Would you say that your work with animals is more rewarding than your acting career, or do you still have just as much affinity for your acting work?

I think it's all rewarding. Let me tell you something, we fought heinous villains, I was the Caped Crusader, and now I am the Canine Crusader!

BATMAN VS. TWO-FACE is out now on Blu-ray and DVD.



ALL THE NEWS
FROM THE WORLDS
OF DOCTOR WHO
WITH KIERON
MOORE

OUTSIDE THE BOX



Series 11 Team Revealed

Let's come clean - when compiling last month's **Outside the Box**, we decided to ignore the rumour going around that Bradley Walsh, host of ITV game show **The Chase**, was to be the new companion, as we deemed it too odd to be true. Fake news! We were wrong. Actual news!

Bradders will play Graham, one of three companions who'll be joining Jodie Whittaker's Doctor in Series 11; we'll also meet Tosin Cole's Ryan and Mandip Gill's Yasmin. Walsh has actually worked with incoming showrunner Chris Chibnall before, on **Law and Order: UK**, though Cole and Gill are comparative newcomers. This'll be the first time the Doctor has had three companions since the Peter Davison era, so it promises to be an interesting shift in **Who**'s dynamic.

In further Series Eleven news, it'll consist of ten episodes, which is less than we've had before, but they'll be 50 minutes each, save for the hour-long opener. Also, Sam Hoyle - a **Broadchurch** colleague of Chibnall's - has been brought onboard as an executive producer, and **Poldark**'s Jamie Childs will direct a block of episodes. Series Eleven won't air until autumn 2018, but begins filming this month, so expect more news soon.

A Brighter SHADA Tale

It seems like we get a new adaptation of *Shada*, the famous Douglas Adams Fourth Doctor serial unfinished due to industrial action, every year. There's been a webcast, an audio play, a novel, a script book, a fan animation... but this one might be as definitive a release as it's ever going to get!

After the success of last year's *The Power of the Daleks* reconstruction, BBC Worldwide has chosen *Shada* as their next project, with the unfilmed segments being animated and intercut with the existing footage. The original cast, including Tom Baker and Lalla Ward, will return to add their voices to the animation.

Shada will be released as a digital download on Friday November 24th, and on DVD and Blu-ray on Monday December 4th. There'll also be a special screening at the BFI Southbank on Saturday December 2nd, and Australian fans will be treated to a limited cinema run from November 24th.

Dudley Simpson, 1922 - 2017

You may not recognise his name, but perhaps you should, as the composer Dudley Simpson, who passed away this month at the age of 95, was one of the most prolific contributors to classic **Doctor Who**. The Australian began his career as a conductor before moving into television in 1961, being brought onto **Who** from the 1964 story *Planet of Giants*. Over the following fifteen years, Simpson provided the music for over 290 **Who** episodes and even had a small role as the conductor in *The Talons of Weng-Chiang*.

WHO Wins Award for LGBT Inclusiveness

When **Doctor Who** returned to our screens in 2005, showrunner Russell T Davies made a clear effort to feature LGBT characters, not least the omnisexual Captain Jack Harkness. It's an effort that's continued into Steven Moffat's tenure, most notably with Series Ten featuring the first openly gay main companion, Bill Potts.

The handling of Bill's sexuality was one of the high points of the series, and so it's appropriate that **PinkNews** has given **Doctor Who** an Ally Award for its LGBT inclusiveness.

Accepting the award, Bill actor Pearl Mackie said: "It's a testament to how well she was received. A couple of young girls talked to me about how watching Bill enabled them to come out and feel comfortable with their own sexuality. For me, that's a massive achievement."

Krikkitmen and Missy Appear in New Books

Douglas Adams fans will be loving this month's column, for yet another of his unmade **Who** stories is being brought back. January 18th will see the release of **Doctor Who and the Krikkitmen**, a James Goss-penned novelisation of a storyline drafted by Adams but never used (well, not in **Doctor Who** - the story, featuring a race of genocidal cricket-themed androids, was adapted into Adams' **The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy** radio series).

Also announced is **The Missy Chronicles**, a collection of short stories following Michelle Gomez's madcap incarnation of the Master. It's from established writers including Cavan Scott, Paul Magrs, and Jacqueline Rayner, and is set for release on February 22nd.

Paddy Russell, 1928 - 2017

Another sad loss, as Patricia 'Paddy' Russell has died at the age of 89. One of the first female directors in television - and the first on **Doctor Who** - Russell began her career as a production assistant in the '50s before becoming a director and working on several beloved series. For **Who**, she directed First Doctor serial *The Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Eve*, Third Doctor adventure *Invasion of the Dinosaurs*, and two fan favourite Tom Baker stories - *Pyramids of Mars* and *Horror of Fang Rock*.



Paddy Russell



Dudley Simpson



GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

Send her victorious, happy and glorious... similarly to how *Star Wars* presented a galaxy under the ruthless control of an Emperor, the Victorian age brought with it an unprecedented degree of power for Queen Vic over a large swathe of our known world under the auspices of the British Empire - and as Mark Gatiss' *Empress Of Mars* showed, a select band of men fighting for both her and their country were able to make it as far as the Red Planet itself, even if they were hardly successful in staving off the natives. Just to confuse matters a little, these natives are no slouches themselves when it comes to attempts at conquest. For they are the Ice Warriors...

"The indigenous species. An ancient reptilian race. They built themselves a sort of bio-mechanical armour for protection. The creature within is at one with its carapace. They could build a city under the sand, yet drench the snows of Mars with innocent blood. They could slaughter whole civilisations, yet weep at the crushing of a flower." as the Doctor puts it.

And they're none too happy when 1881's finest pitch up, their Empress Iraxxa awoken by Vincey, one of the platoon under Colonel Godsacre's command, whose rather foolish decision to undertake a spot of jewel theft when presented with the sight of her hibernation chamber will have disastrous consequences for all bar one of the company of men he serves alongside. The build up to the episode found itself with an intriguing subplot after it emerged that Gatiss had dubbed the addition of a black soldier 'problematic', purely on the grounds of what he believed to be historical accuracy. Until, that is, he happened across the story of Jimmy Durham - a Sudanese boy adopted and

raised by the men of the Durham Light Infantry after being found alongside the Nile in 1886 - who subsequently enlisted as a bandsman at the age of just fourteen. As county archivist Liz Bregazzi wrote of his journey:

"It is the most remarkable and fascinating story, perhaps because we couldn't imagine such a thing happening today. This little boy of around two was discovered on what was effectively a battlefield and taken away by the

British regiment that found him. It's almost impossible to compare that with life in the modern-day army - the idea of that happening in Afghanistan or Iraq in recent times is unthinkable. But although the soldiers of the DLI were taking him away from his home they almost certainly saved his life."

Lumbering alongside the redcoats is the apparent manservant Friday, whose ship is implied to have crashed in Isandlwana,





South Africa, during the first real skirmish of the Anglo-Zulu War (which actually took place eight years later and ended in defeat for Victoria's forces). *"Isn't it obvious? Friday has been using you all along. His aim was to get back to Mars and find his Queen."* Such dedication from her Sentinel. Not that the magnificently moustached Captain Catchlove is having any of that. *"We're British! Mars is part of the Empire now."*

He and his commanding officer have something of a complicated relationship, to say the least - the Colonel is hiding a guilty secret, the Captain has knowledge of it and uses that to further his own self-interest. Which was, of course, unthinkable in the line of duty to the average soldier of the time, and comeuppance will arrive at the hands most suited to deliver it! 1964's *Zulu* depicts another such conflict with a more favourable result from their point of view at Rorke's Drift, as 150 British and Colonial troops fend off between three and four thousand Zulu warriors - Michael Caine portraying Lieutenant Gonville Bromhead, one of its key personnel and a recipient of the Victoria Cross in the immediate aftermath.

Of course, little do the chaps know they're in the presence of a rather unique knight of the realm, the honour bestowed by no less than Prince Albert's beloved herself following a werewolf attack at Torchwood House on the Scottish moors ten years prior to Friday's induction of sorts into her military rank and file. *"By the power invested in me by the Church and the State, I dub thee Sir Doctor of TARDIS."* There's a flipside to the pomp and circumstance doled out, mind, when the dame - Rose Tyler having also got herself a title - and her knight in pinstripe armour are promptly told in no uncertain terms to leave her jurisdiction and not feel any obligation to nip back anytime soon!

He also has quite some history with the

descendants of those who will come to the defence of their planet, first encountering the species itself after arriving at Britannicus Base with another Victoria, Waterfield, in tow. You might also recognise the alias he adopts upon first meeting the seasoned royal who also served as Defender of the Faith and Empress of India, having pinched it from his other companion at the time! *"I'm Doctor James McCrimmon, from the township of Balamory."* The true Jamie is also present as acquaintance with the Ice Warriors is renewed on the Moon, plans afoot to plant *The Seeds of Death* using hijacked T-Mat technology.

Just to confuse matters, the dynamic changes with a regeneration for the Doctor, *The Curse Of Peladon* presenting him with Izlyr, a diplomat sent as his kin's envoy to the Galactic Federation who is bound by a strict code of honour to repay the not

inconsiderable debt of having his life saved in assisting a by-now considerably less rumpled Time Lord with his attempts to get to the bottom of intrigue at the court of King Peladon. A sequel, *The Monster of Peladon*, set 50 years after *Curse*, has a squadron of Ice Warriors called in as heavies by the Federation to ensure production of trisilicate - a deliberate nod to the 1974 miners' strike.

And that appeared to be that until Gatiss thawed them, or at least one, out in the form of Grand Marshal Skaldak for *Cold War*, though there is at least one human addition to the ranks as Godsacre seeks redemption for his earlier attempt at desertion by pledging himself to Iraxxa in the service of what he hopes will be a new and better world. Makes one proud to be British, doesn't it?

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY





FAREWELL TO TWELVE

It's the end of an era. Incumbent Doctor PETER CAPALDI and showrunner STEVEN MOFFAT are exiting the TARDIS after one last hurrah this Christmas. But, before they go, they have one more tale to tell. A tale featuring not one, not two, but three Doctors, a returning companion, a familiar guest star and time itself in peril. And it begins, as all fairy tales (nearly) do, with the words 'Twice upon a Time'...

by Christian Bone



After three series, stretched across four years, the tenure of the Twelfth Doctor will come to an end this Christmas. It has proved quite a controversial one within the fanbase itself but, whatever your opinions, you can't deny that the era has been hugely successful in other areas. The UK ratings aren't too sharp these days, but *Doctor Who's* worldwide exposure has gone through the roof since 2013.

By far the best thing about the past few years, though, has been the Twelfth Doctor himself: Peter Capaldi. A man who was destined to become Doctor Who (yes - that is his name. Capaldi says it is, so there) since he fell in love with the show back in 1963. It's fitting, then, that his journey on the series should end with a reunion with the version of the character that started it all.

At the climax of the already-emotional Series Ten finale *The Doctor Falls*, hundreds of Whovian jaws hit the floor when the Twelfth Doctor began to regenerate in the Antarctic... and was joined by the First Doctor! OK, most fans knew this coming due to all the rumours, but that didn't take away from the sheer magic of seeing Doctor Numero Uno - the original, you might say - return to the show for the first time since 1983's *The Five Doctors*.

This isn't just a gratuitous multi-Doctor story for the sake of it, though (well, not mostly). As fans can work out from the South Pole setting, this is the First Doctor from the end of *The Tenth Planet*, just moments before he himself will regenerate. It's clear that the two Doctors will both resist their upcoming regenerations for the special, before deciding that the show must go on and embracing the change. It's sure to be an emotional hour, and

should go a long way to bolstering the First Doctor's, let's face it, pretty underwhelming death in the original story.

Not that the special will feature the late, great William Hartnell, of course, or even his previous replacement Richard Hurndall. Donning the elder statesman's astrakhan hat in *Twice Upon a Time* is David Bradley. Known worldwide as Argus Filch, the grouchy Hogwarts caretaker in the Harry Potter films, *Doctor Who* lovers have already seen him expertly step into Hartnell's shoes in 2013's biopic *An Adventure in Space and Time*. He gave an impeccable performance in the Mark Gatiss-penned TV movie, so it's only natural that his take on the First Doctor is now about to become canon.

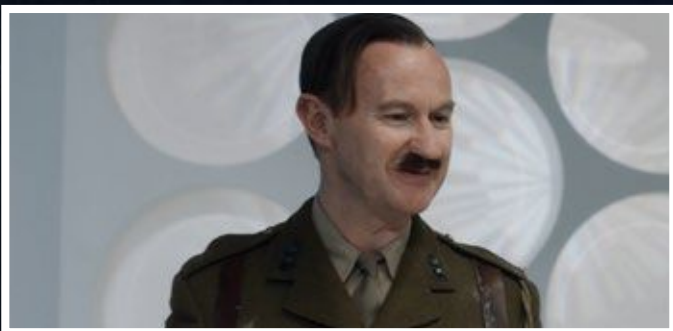
Speaking of Gatiss, the prolific writer and actor is returning to *Doctor Who* once more to see his friends Steven Moffat and Peter Capaldi off. This will mark Gatiss' (ha!) fifth time acting in the show. Most memorably, he first featured as the villainous Professor Lazarus in 2007's *The Lazarus Experiment* opposite David Tennant. Later on, he voiced Danny Boy - the WW2 pilot who takes his spitfire into space - in both 2010's *Victory of the Daleks* and 2011's *A Good Man Goes to War*. Finally, he appeared under heavy prosthetics in that same year's *The Wedding of River Song*, as the alien Viking Gantok.

So who is Gatiss playing in *Twice Upon a Time*? Well, he will portray an officer in the First World War who gets swept up in an adventure with the two Doctors. His exact identity is currently shrouded in mystery, with press releases only calling him the Captain. Early theories had him pegged as the Brigadier's father or even a Time Lord,

but the latest word on the grapevine is that he's playing Gilbert MacKenzie-Trench, aka the architect who created the blue Police Box. Plus, Gatiss isn't the only *Doctor Who* writer appearing in the special. Toby Whithouse, who also does a spot of acting, will pop up as a German soldier (you can spot him in the trailer).

Also joining the two Time Lords and Mark Gatiss on their journey is Pearl Mackie as Bill Potts - returning for one last trip to say goodbye to her Doctor. Bill has had a rough time of it lately, what with being shot in the chest and converted into a Cyberman, but thankfully, she managed to recover and fly around the universe with her space-puddle girlfriend (just roll with it). It would have been tragic to leave the Doctor and Bill each thinking the other had died, so hopefully we will get a more heart-warming ending to the pair's friendship in the special.

Bill isn't the only companion who is set to reappear in *Twice Upon a Time*, however. Warning: this one hasn't been officially confirmed so, spoilerphobes, you might want to skip ahead to the next paragraph. For the rest of you, it has leaked out that Jenna Coleman will be reprising her role as Clara Oswald in what is expected to be a brief cameo. This shouldn't be too surprising. Both Billie Piper and Karen Gillan previously returned for David Tennant and Matt Smith's regenerations, so Coleman is just continuing the modern tradition of the Doctor's first companion returning for his last episode. On the topic of Matt Smith, there's an even more dubious rumour that the Eleventh Doctor himself could be appearing in the special. But it's best not to put too much stock in that one.



Directing the Twelfth Doctor's swansong is, fittingly, Rachel Talalay. The accomplished movie and TV director has helmed all the finales of Series Eight to Ten, making her the definitive director of the Capaldi era. While chatting about how she approached the episode with the *This Week in Time Travel* podcast, Talalay revealed that she had become "an expert in *The Tenth Planet* ... for reasons that will become clearer over Christmas." So it seems that *Twice Upon a Time* will include extensive recreations of scenes from the First Doctor's final story.

This makes sense with what we have gathered about the special so far. We've already seen David Bradley give his rendition of the First Doctor's "have you no emotions?" speech. Plus, companions Ben and Polly (originally played by Michael Craze and Anneke Wills) have been recast for the special, with *Hollyoaks*' Jared Garfield and *Kingsman*'s Lily Travers taking up the roles. It's looking likely that *Twice Upon a Time* will go some way towards filling the gaps in what happened to the First Doctor in *The Tenth Planet*. In Episode Three, he fell ill out of nowhere and then promptly regenerated in Episode Four. There is clearly more to be told, then, and Moffat and Talalay are mining that untapped potential for the upcoming episode.

But what is the actual plot of the Christmas special? Well, while we know lots about its set-up, guest cast and how it will invariably end with a regeneration, the middle bit is the part we're not quite so sure on. The official synopsis remains vague, but it looks like the two Doctors will have to team up to weather an 'epic adventure' that seems to

involve themes of destiny, change and 'the resilience of humanity'.

"Two Doctors stranded in a forbidding snowscape, refusing to face regeneration. And a British army captain seemingly destined to die in the First World War, but taken from the trenches to play his part in the Doctor's story. This is the magical last chapter in the Twelfth Doctor's epic adventure. He must face his past to decide his future. And the Doctor will realise the resilience of humanity, discovering hope in his darkest frozen moment. It's the end of an era. But the Doctor's journey is only just beginning."

We haven't heard much about this recently, but a few months ago a rumour rose up claiming that the special would bring the Twelfth Doctor's tenure full circle by linking back to his debut cameo in *The Day of the Doctor*. According to the rumour, whatever the episode's plot is will culminate with the two Doctors joining their other selves in saving Gallifrey. It's hard to tell whether we should put any stock in this rumour - it could easily be either something fans have made up or a genuine move from Moffat, what with his love of joining all the dots.

But as awesome as the First Doctor, the companion cameos and the potential trip to Gallifrey are, we're going to be watching this special for one reason more than any other: the Twelfth Doctor's regeneration. Uniquely, we have already seen *why* he dies - he was fatally injured fighting the Cybermen in the Series Ten finale - but we have yet to see the *how*: his actual regeneration scene. Comments from Nicholas Briggs - the voice of the Daleks, who was there on Capaldi's

final day on set - hinted that filming on the scene lasted an entire day, so we may be in for a whopper of a regeneration.

Peter Capaldi has given conflicting statements on what he thinks about returning to *Doctor Who* at some point in the future, but mostly he suggests that he is going to say goodbye to the show he has loved since childhood for good. "I think when you should go, you should go" the actor said at San Francisco Comic-Con. Let's hope that *Twice Upon a Time* gives him the final bow he deserves.

But, to quote the Doctor from last year's Christmas special, "Everything ends, and it's always sad. But then everything begins again too, and that's always happy." For though the show is losing Peter Capaldi, it is gaining the wonderfully-talented Jodie Whittaker in his place. We know precious little about how she is going to approach playing the Thirteenth Doctor, but Moffat has commented on Whittaker's first scene in this episode, describing her as giving us "the Doctor we've always known, but in, to say the least, a new way."

With a brand new cast (Whittaker will be joined by Bradley Walsh, Tosin Cole, and Mandip Gill in the TARDIS) and showrunner, *Broadchurch*'s Chris Chibnall, ready to steer the series to new places in 2018, *Doctor Who* is about to begin again. As a wise, crotchety old man once said, moments before his first ever regeneration, it's far from being all over.

He didn't know how right he was.

The DOCTOR WHO episode TWICE UPON A TIME airs on BBC One on Christmas Day.

GO BEYOND The Column



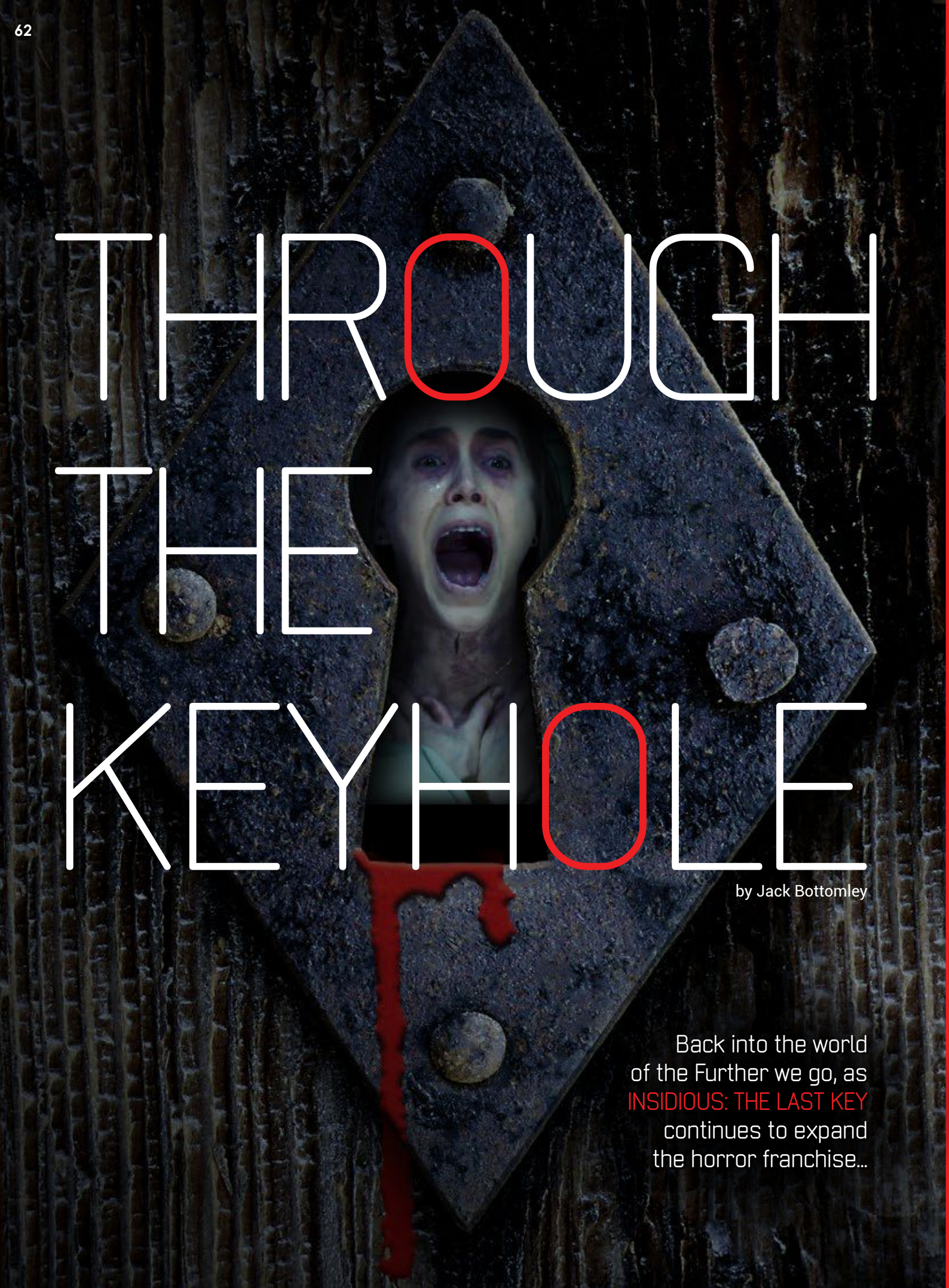
PLUS

podcast



available now on

iTunes



THROUGH THE KEYHOLE

by Jack Bottomley

Back into the world
of the Further we go, as
INSIDIOUS: THE LAST KEY
continues to expand
the horror franchise...



James Wan has truly clawed his way to the bloodstained hall of fame in horror cinema. From accidentally birthing a box office-busting franchise in *Saw* to creating a paranormal chiller classic in *Insidious* and a successful universe in *The Conjuring* films, he is a director who is well respected by fans of ghouls and gore. However, another individual who belongs in the same red-splattered spotlight of the horror stage is one Leigh Whannell, the star/co-writer of *Saw* and, more importantly, the man who has written each and every instalment in the *Insidious* franchise and actually directed the last film, *Insidious: Chapter 3*, in 2015. He is the key (groan) to the saga's success and now, once again, we tiptoe through the tulips as he pens another tale of supernatural torment in *Insidious: The Last Key*, which arrives to distress cinemagoers in this upcoming New Year.

A lot has changed since the first *Insidious*, originally a nerve-wrecking tale of a demonic creature terrorising the Lambert family and trying to take hold of young boy Dalton's (Ty Simpkins) physical body as he traps his soul in the dark spiritual netherworld known as 'the Further', but through sequels and prequels, the story has become much wider. Firstly with the highly over-complicated and massively disappointing *Insidious:*

Chapter 2 in 2014, which delved into the backstory of the Woman in Black from the first film who beleaguered Dalton's dad Josh (Patrick Wilson) and came to possess him (though the crossdressing murderous entity was ultimately defeated in *Chapter 2*). The second film's failings notwithstanding, the series' box office success continued and led to 2015's *Insidious: Chapter 3*, and it is this film that has the most germaneness when discussing *The Last Key*.

Insidious: Chapter 3 was actually a prequel to the first film and looked at a young woman called Quinn Brenner (Stefanie Scott), whose attempts to make contact with her deceased mother opened the paranormal floodgates, releasing upon her a sinister presence, in the form of a devious oxygen-mask-wearing being that sought to drag her soul into the darkness it occupied. The film also expanded franchise icon Elise Rainier (the fabulous Lin Shaye) - the parapsychologist from the first two films - explaining that she had a husband and how she lost him, how her gift led her to be victimised by the Woman in Black (who does eventually kill her at the climax of the first film) and how she came to work with her associates Specs (Whannell) and Tucker (Angus Sampson). Far more emotional than previous instalments, this

prequel was a triumphant entry in the series that got things firmly back on track and felt legitimately scary and intense plus cemented Elise as a genre legend, with Shaye being allowed to deepen the character and, it must be said, have a jubilantly badass moment in the final act of the film.

So, after instilling the series with a life force once more, we move onto *Insidious: The Last Key*, which once again is a prequel to the first film and a sequel to the last. Whannell writes, but this time hands over the director's chair to Adam Robitel (*The Taking of Deborah Logan*, *Paranormal Activity: The Ghost Dimension*), as they are backed by the producing powerhouse that is James Wan, *Paranormal Activity*'s Oren Peli and Blumhouse's Jason Blum. After an amazing big screen horror year in 2017, *The Last Key* will kickstart 2018 with a thrilling shriek and we hope this trend of darn fine big screen genre advances will continue. Once again, a fresh horror talent is being handed the key (pun intended) to a big project and hopefully (like David F. Sandberg with *Annabelle: Creation*, Mike Flanagan with *Ouija: Origin of Evil* and Andres Muschietti with *It*), this will be another breakout moment.

However, what is the new film actually



about? Well, the next dread-laden path of the series once again centres on Elise and her team, this time inspecting a haunting in New Mexico, in the very house where Elise grew up. This is another investigation that will test her fortitude and the family's resilience to evil, as to free the home of this curse, Elise may need to journey ever deeper into the Further. Rumours suggest that this new film will neatly link to the start of the original and it certainly seems as though *The Last Key* is all about connection. The footage we've seen is sprinkled with moments from the series so far, suggesting that this haunting will be the worst of all (and that's saying something).

The key-fingered spectre 'Keyface' (played by Javier Botet - who's not new to playing a sinister entity, see *Mama*, *The Conjuring 2*, and *It*) is certainly an arresting image and already a strong starting point for a film that seems to be intending to cause more sleepless nights with more bloodcurdling bumps in the night as well as burrowing into Elise's origin. Thus far, we only know that her work had at one point led her to dangerous personal places as an adult, but could this film show us why or when she decided to use her gift for good or indeed how she came to realise she had a gift at all? The trailer suggests that

Elise is hazy about her youth and the inevitable blackness that surrounded it but this horrific homecoming will likely jog a few dusty, suppressed and sadistic memories. However, outside of its central figure focus, we wonder how *The Last Key* will tie into the others and how the idea of the Further will be even more expanded as the trailer promises? There are many questions to answer here and many mysteries to be unlocked and, hopefully, *The Last Key* can handle the task, being more comparable to the first and third parts, rather than the narratively tangled *Chapter 2*.

Along for the ghost train this time is a mixture of talents new and established. Lin Shaye, of course, is back as Elise, as she continues to add layers to arguably what has come to be her defining role onscreen. Shaye has already built up a career in horror, from appearing in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and cult classic *Critters* to roles in the *Ouija* films but her work on *Insidious* continues to exemplify her screen presence and ability. Also returning is Whannell and Sampson as the bickering Specs and Tucker, in the last film we saw how they came to be Elise's trusted colleagues and chances are this time the duo will find out more about their friend and colleague than they ever knew before.

Those are the returning characters, though, making their franchise debuts are the aptly last-named Spencer Locke (*Resident Evil: Extinction*), Kirk Acevedo (*Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*, TV's *12 Monkeys*), and Bruce Davison (*X-Men*) in as-yet-unspecified roles. Then there are turns by Ava Kolker (*Girl Meets World*) and Hana Hayes (*The Grinder*), who are playing Elise as a girl and a teenager, which immediately tells us how far back into the character's history this entry will take us.

Overall, Whannell is keeping a lot of his script under lock and key (tired of the puns yet?) but come the New Year we will discover the secrets locked away within this chapter of the *Insidious* franchise. Hopes are high that the series can continue to frighten and compel its audience and when Joseph Bishara's (the go-to guy for atmospheric music) score unleashes those screeching violins on the silver screen, we are sure there will be shivers aplenty throughout the aisles. Into the Further we go then, and while it may be a waking nightmare for Elise and co. and sure to awaken some ghastly memories for our favourite parapsychologist, we can't wait to break on through to the other side.

Call in the paranormal investigators, as *INSIDIOUS: THE LAST KEY* haunts UK cinemas on the January 12th, 2018.

ALL THE NEWS FROM
THE WORLDS OF
STAR TREK
WITH IAIN
ROBERTSON

SUBSPACE RELAY



DISCOVERY Season Two Is On The Way!

We may only be 60% of the way through **Discovery**'s first season (nine down, six to go, we knew that GCSE Maths would come in useful someday), but we can now officially expect more. CBS has renewed the latest **Trek** incarnation for a second season.

*"This series has a remarkable creative team and cast who have demonstrated their ability to carry on the **Star Trek** legacy,"* said CBS's Marc DeBevoise, announcing the renewal. *"We are extremely proud of what they've accomplished and are thrilled to be bringing fans a second season of this tremendous series."*

It's little surprise that the show's been renewed. Although CBS hasn't released figures for their All Access service (which airs **Discovery** in the US), they've said it's driven up subscriber numbers to record levels. It's also - for the most part - been a hit with both fans and critics (we're still not completely sold on the adult tone or weird Klingons, but otherwise it's a lot of fun).

The second part of **Discovery**'s first season (which CBS is referring to as 'Chapter Two') will air in January. No air date's been announced for Season Two, but we're guessing it will be late 2018/early 2019.

DESTINATION STAR TREK guests

We're still almost a year away from the return of **Destination Star Trek** - Europe's biggest **Trek** con - to the UK, but they're busy adding guests.

The convention returns to Birmingham's NEC next October, two years after the 50th anniversary convention. Next year's is looking to focus heavily on **Deep Space Nine**, celebrating the show's 25th anniversary.

They've recently added Michael Dorn, Nana Visitor, René Auberjonois, Terry Farrell, Nicole De Boer, and Camille Saviola (Kai Opaka) from **Trek**'s greatest incarnation (yes, you heard us right) as well as executive producer Ira Steven Behr, and David Zappone, co-producer of the upcoming **DS9** documentary **What We Left Behind**.

We can also expect **Next Generation**'s Marina Sirtis, the **Discovery** Klingon duo of Mary Chieffo (L'Rell) and Kenneth Mitchell (Kol), as well as the one and only Walter Koenig.

They'll join the already-announced **Deep Space Nine** Ferengi trio of Armin Shimerman, Max Grodénchik, and Aron Eisenberg (who'll all be in costume), as well as **Enterprise**'s Linda Park. It's also 'rumoured' (i.e. they announced it before they were supposed to then had to ask everyone to forget) that William Shatner will again be attending.

Further information and tickets are available at destinationstartrek.com

Kelvin Universe Props Go On Sale

Fancy owning a piece of recent **Trek** memorabilia? A selection of over 400 costumes and props from 2009's **Star Trek** and 2013's **Into Darkness** are set to go on sale in early December.

The sale includes items such as the crew's Starfleet uniforms, two of Benedict Cumberbatch's Khan costumes, and a Klingon guard uniform. Props include the likes of phasers, communicators, and Spock's scientifically inaccurate, volcano-freezing cold fusion device from **Into Darkness**.

Don't expect them to be cheap, though. Chris Pine's Kirk costume is expected to reach \$5,000-\$10,000, whereas a communicator will set you back between \$1,500 and \$2,500. Wonder how much one of **Into Darkness**' plot holes is going for?

Although the auction features a plethora of delights from the first two movies, fans of **Star Trek Beyond** (yes, there are some, us included!) are out of luck as nothing from that film will be included, which is sad as we were hoping to get some of Keenser's acidic snot (don't judge us).

You can find further details and register for the auction at propstore.com.

Koenig's Thoughts on Modern TREK

While most feedback on **Discovery** has been positive, one notable **Trek** alumnus isn't interested in the continued adventures of the franchise he helped originate.

Walter Koenig told reporters that he's avoided watching the new show *"because my philosophy on life is to look ahead,"* he said in



CULT
TELEVISION
and MOVIE
THEME BARS

*est 1998



109 PORTLAND STREET, MANCHESTER, M1 6DN t. 0161 212 2997

www.fabcafe.co.uk

an interview plugging a convention for a show he appeared on fifty years ago.

Speaking of the J. J. Abrams movies, he was a little more forthcoming. "He changed the format to compete with the other multi-hundred million dollar projects that use computer graphics sensibly. It's now more of a phenomenon - a visual, sensory experience, rather than an emotional experience."

"These new **Star Trek** followers are there for the thrill and that's fine, but it seems like they're not necessarily looking for something that speaks to their sense of humanity and a sense of personal investment in the statement of an optimistic world that the audiences in the '60s did when we were relying almost exclusively on story and relationships. I don't know what percentage these new fans represent, but they are certainly now a dynamic in terms of the franchise's popularity."

Discovery fans can take solace in that at least one **Original Series** star has seen the new show: William Shatner, who attended the premiere, maintains a friendly Twitter rivalry with Jason Isaacs. Asked what he thought about the first two episodes, he described Isaacs' acting as 'sublime' and 'Oscar worthy,' which is nice. Isaacs, who first appeared in Episode Three is yet to return the compliment.

Anton Yelchin Memorial

A full-sized bronze statue of the late **Trek** star has been unveiled at LA's Hollywood Forever Cemetery.

The dedication ceremony in early October was attended by his **Trek** co-stars Zoe Saldana and Simon Pegg, as well as director J. J. Abrams. A host of other actors and co-stars, including Jennifer Lawrence - who appeared in two films with the actor - Jon Voight, and Demi Moore also attended alongside Yelchin's parents, who arranged for the memorial.

Speaking at the ceremony, Saldana said "It is a bittersweet moment, because we're here for Anton, and he's not here with us. But it alleviates my heart knowing that we'll keep him alive. We're going to keep remembering him in the hopes that by practicing all the things he believed in and remembering all the love that he gave us, and all the joy he gave us, we're able to just keep him here with us."

Rapp Alleges Spacey Made 'Sexual Advance' On Him At 14

It was sadly inevitable that the wave of revelations of sexual misconduct sweeping Hollywood would eventually impact on **Trek**, and now **Discovery** star Anthony Rapp has alleged he was mistreated at the hands of none other than Kevin Spacey.

Rapp alleged that in 1986, aged 14, when he was appearing in his first Broadway show, **Precious Sons**, he met the then 26-year-old Spacey, who was also appearing on Broadway.

According to Rapp, at a party at Spacey's apartment the actor placed him on a bed and climbed on top of him. Rapp said he's come forward "not to simply air a grievance, but to try to shine another light on the decades of behaviour that have been allowed to continue because of many people, including myself, being silent. I'm feeling really awake to the moment that we're living in, and I'm hopeful that this can make a difference."

Spacey, for his part, has said he doesn't recall the encounter, but has offered Rapp his sincere apologies.

Two **Trek** guest stars are also amongst the sixty women who have made accusations against Harvey Weinstein. Mia Kirshner, who plays Amanda on **Discovery**, and two-time **Next Generation** guest star Ashley Judd have both accused the producer of harassment.



FROM THE
DESK OF THE
STARBURST
TREKOLOGIST
B. JONES

THE TREKOLOGIST



Oh My! What a Discovery!

Well, *Star Trek: Discovery* has finally hit our screens and I for one am yelling a grateful thanks from the rooftops. Whether you like the new show or not, you can at least be extremely grateful it's new *Trek* and not just another reality series or a mind-numbing game show!

Discovery is a visual delight starting with the very first shot, which opens with an amazing filmic pullback from the myriad of colourful galaxies in the eye of an alien. These are not just any aliens. These are the Klingons! Oooh! When we say Klingons, imagine the *Next Generation* Klingons with a full body upgrade refit. They are gnarlier, have more ridges just everywhere and a set of teeth you could open beer bottles with. "How can these be Klingons?" cry the masses. Well, they do carry very pointy Bat'leths, follow the teachings of Kahless and seem to revel in pain-inducing rituals. The biggest consistency points go to their speaking of Klingon! That's the original language that was invented waaay back for *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*; fortunately for us humans, they are mostly subtitled so we can sing along.

Of the aliens we see on board, Lt Saru is perhaps the most defined. He is the science officer and can be assumed to be one of the first contact races that the newly formed Federation met after Vulcans. Lt Saru is the

new Data or Spock - our window into the human condition. If, of course, the human condition was seen through the eyes of a very scaredy rabbit. Let's hope Elmer Fudd never went wabbit hunting in space!

The one character we are familiar with from previous *Trek* shows is Sarek. The Sarek presented here is much younger and more vibrant. He is a teacher at the Vulcan academy and has adopted young orphan Michael and raised her as his own. Clearly the Vulcan Bendii Syndrome, or dementia as we would see it, hit him at an early age as it would seem he forgot to mention this extra sibling to Spock. Mind you, he never mentioned Sybok to him either. For a Vulcan parent, Sarek seems to be a bit of a liability.

Michael is the lead character in this show and it is her story that we follow in the two-part pilot. As she was raised on Vulcan, she has adopted a very specific speech pattern. Logic, it would seem, is her forte. In a manner very reminiscent of one James T. Kirk, she convinces the computer to let her escape the brig in a mind-bending array of logical arguments. The conversation with the computer takes place when the brig section is destroyed, leaving Michael surrounded by a wall, a floor, a forcefield and a whole lot of space. In a quite brilliant piece of Douglas Adams-type logic she argues, "If I am in the brig surrounded by a force

field, I cannot escape. However, if the force field protecting me from escaping collapses I will die. Therefore, you must let me out". Fortunately, she didn't duplicate Kirk's ability to convince the computer to blow itself up as well.

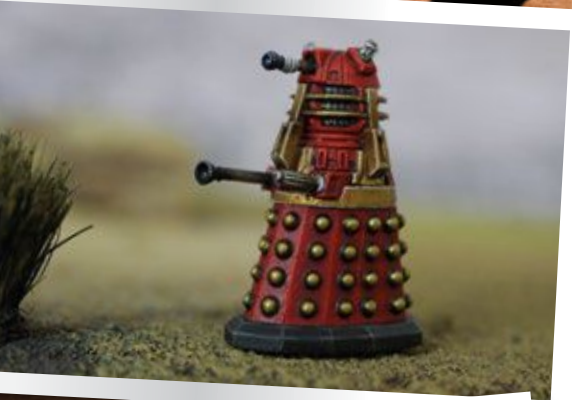
With a combination of great-looking retro tech, fabulous sound effects and interactive holographic communication, **Discovery** looks set to send us on a very interesting journey. Just one thing to note in the holographic tech operations manual: how did Sarek the hologram lean up against the table in Michael's quarters half a galaxy away? Even *Quantum Leap*'s AI never managed that in five years of appearing from thin air!



JEUX SANS FRONTIERES

by Ed Fortune

WARLORD GAMES is part of the new generation of British games companies that use old school methods and modern technology to produce brilliant new games. Warlord's factor can be found in what Nottingham locals call the 'Lead Belt', a strip of land near the city that is filled with workshops that produce games and models. Warlord produces sci-fi, horror and world war inspired models and rules, including officially licensed DOCTOR WHO and 2000 AD models and games. STARBURST paid a visit to their factory for their tenth anniversary to find out more...



We caught up with John Stallard, Warlord's CEO, who gave us a quick tour of the factory. The whole place was one massive hive of industry, with amazing dioramas and fantastically painted models being set up at Warlord HQ's grand hall for a weekend of celebratory gaming. John's been a gamer his entire life.

The origins of Warlord are rather nifty. John told us, "I worked at Games Workshop for 25 Years, got made redundant and thought that the last thing I wanted to do was get back into toy soldiers. And the last thing I did was to get back into toy soldiers. Fortunately, Rick Priestly and I had always wanted to do a boxed set of Romans in plastic, which would have been the world's first hard plastic Romans."

"We'd sketched it out for years but didn't do it because it was deemed to be a competing product," John continued. "So when I got made redundant it was the ideal time to do that. I found Paul Sawyer, ex-White Dwarf editor, and we set up

a company called Warlord Games. Warlord was Paul's idea. We planned it all round my kitchen table."

"We spent a lot of money on doing our first set of Roman soldiers. Twenty-six thousand pounds, if I remember, that's how much plastic injection tooling was back then. We did those and it kind of grew. Before long, we'd made some Celts and then I did my other passions, English Civil War, goodies and baddies." He explains, "We found a company called Bolt Action, which had made some World War Two miniatures. We decided that was what we needed, World War Two in 28mm scale. We commissioned the game and before we knew it, we had started making tanks in both plastic and resin. Rick Priestley came on board with us as a freelance writer and wrote us the Black Powder game and the science fiction game Gates of Antares. It's kind of just gone on since then. The biggest challenge was getting the cash flow right. It took up most of my savings and it was rather frightening, but we got there."



Almost all of Warlord's output is produced on site, with the exception of the plastics, which are made elsewhere in the UK. Warlord's range includes plastic and metal models. The arrangement is a fascinating mix of technologies. On the one hand, 3D printing, space age design technology and high-powered graphics computers are used to design the models. Elsewhere in the factory, there is an elite squad of hard working people who make metal models the same way people have been making small and delicate things out of metal for centuries, by heating metal till it melts and then getting someone with a big ladle to pour the molten metal into the mould. The moulds are made of silicon and a high-powered centrifuge is used to ensure there's no flaws in the model.

It's not all plain sailing. When we toured the factory, the ladies responsible for casting all the resin models were still experimenting with getting the perfect cast for the forthcoming TARDIS model. We saw several different types of blue. The resin process requires a steady hand, a keen eye and patience. Each piece is also cast by hand.

It doesn't just stop at making the actual models. Warlord's *Doctor Who* game, *Into the Time Vortex*, is notable not only for the lovely pieces but the packaging as well. Each box has the Seal of Rassilon and looks amazing. The packing is done in-house, as is the design. However, the nature of the licence means that every element of the design has to be approved by the BBC.

In order to get a miniature of Clara Oswald onto the shelves and into the hands of eager Whovians, not only does someone have to carefully sculpt Jenna Coleman's body in a tiny scale, but it then has to be approved by both the BBC and the actor herself. If they are too tall, too short, the nose too long or the figure not quite right, the whole thing has to start again. Though the model comes unpainted, a painted example has to appear on the box. This also has to go through an approval process. Warlord employs professional model painters who spend all day making sure that each piece looks the very best it can, and they have a former movie prop maker on hand should they want to display their models in the best light. One of the dioramas they're currently working on is a full *Tomb of The Cybermen* set, including miniature Cybermen bursting out of their pods. Every model they produce gets the custom treatment, from Sherman Tanks to *Doctor Who*, from Alien Space Craft to their special *Dad's Army* military unit miniatures set. And yes, those models come in both civilian and home guard uniforms.

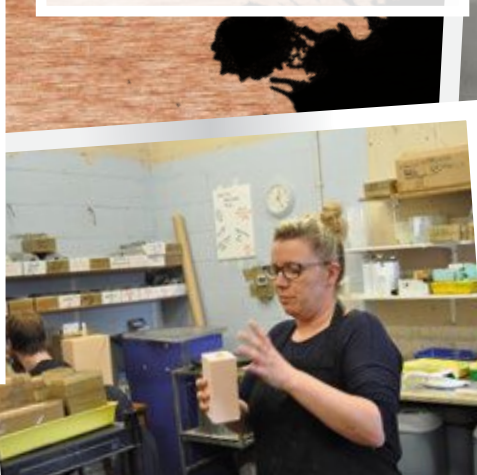
Paul Sawyer is perhaps known to older gamers from the heyday of *White Dwarf* magazine, where he went by the charming moniker of 'Fat Bloke'. He now runs the beating heart of any games company, the Design Studio. He



said "We started out on John's kitchen table and then years down the line we have eighty staff and all the rest. It seems like aeons have passed. I'm responsible for our logo, our imagery, social media, anything to do with the games. All the fun stuff. When we saw the original high quality Bolt Action miniatures, we thought - let's have that. There were gaps in the line, there wasn't a Tiger, there wasn't a Panzer IV, all the key things you needed in a World War Two game."

"We know that you need a games system so people can play against each other. We had a think about the kind of game we wanted. We talked to Alessio Cavatore, another ex-Games Workshop person. I wanted to get away from the 'I go, you go' system, which was just not engaging for me." Stallard revealed, "One person has a go and the other person is sat twiddling their thumbs for half an hour. It becomes very predictable. We came up with the Bolt Action dice mechanic, which changes it up a bit. A game that's fun, we don't want people wading through spreadsheets. We wanted a game for the miniatures; we wanted to present the whole offer."

Warlord currently has the license for 2000 AD-related games. Historically, these games have normally been based around Judge Dredd. Paul has other plans, however: "The first game in the license will be Strontium Dog, developed by Gav Thorpe and Andy Chambers. We want to step away from Judge Dredd for a little while. We wanted to make sure we had something a little bit different. No one has done anything major around Strontium Dog. We did ask ourselves what it should be and it was almost Nemesis the Warlock or Mean Machine, or ABC Warriors. The plan is to create a games system that is generic and it should work for the likes of Slaine, or a Bill Savage game. We can do all sorts of things with one system, skinning it as you need to. Obviously, Slaine will have magic and so on, but it'll all be one core system."





"One of our other games, *Black Powder*, is very popular for the same reason. You don't need to learn new rules for historical gaming, it's all *Black Powder*," John continues, "Same with *2000 AD*. The plan is for each to be a separate boxed game, with boxes and rulebooks to add. We'll hold something back for extra books, so we'll give the *Battle for Milton Keynes* the full thing."

STARBURST understands that the Warlord licence doesn't include either of the movies, though the team are big fans of the Karl Urban movie. And, of course, there's a forthcoming Judge Dredd TV show, so at the moment it's obvious that we won't be seeing Dredd in the small scale for a little while to come. However, given that the licence covers everything 2000 AD, that still includes Zenith, Halo Jones, Nikolai Dante, Sinister Dexter and well, pretty much 40 years of thrill-power.

It's impossible to have a decent game without good rules. Roger Gerrish is the chap responsible for the *Doctor Who Exterminate Game*, which is a Daleks vs Cybermen skirmish combat game. "It's really there to simulate those little battles that are always part of the show."

The game is set up to simulate all sorts of scenarios from the show, and the Doctor and companions make up major expansions for the game. "There's a *Voyage of the Damned* set coming out" Roger tells us. "Astrid Peth isn't going to be running hitting people over the head with cocktail tray. So we've given her a stealthy ability and also made her someone

that the Doctor will want to protect. In any particular scenario, the Doctor will gain victory points for keeping her alive. What she does in the show is she makes the ultimate sacrifice. It's a bit harsh on the character, but there's a rule in the game that means if the Doctor finds himself 'exterminated' then Astrid Peth can throw herself in the way instead. I've done something similar with Rory and Amy. If they're together, Rory can sacrifice himself for Amy. In those scenarios, Amy will be a character you'll want to keep alive."

"We've been trawling through the primary source material, incorporating those characters. With Victoria, her screaming has been known to put Cybermen off, so we'll probably put that in." Roger continues, "With Donna, if she shouts at something, people just stop. The character can harangue the opponent. Davros will have the power to stop the game so he can tell everyone his plans as well, probably."

Planned models include the War Doctor, the Eighth Doctor (in full *Night of The Doctor* costume) and the Sisterhood of Karn, amongst many, many others.

Another one of Warlord's games designers is the legendary Rick Priestley. He's responsible for early editions of *Warhammer 40,000*. From the pseudo-roleplaying game that was the first edition to the complete wargame with army lists that would become the world-famous game, Rick designed and oversaw the games creation. He's now one of Warlord Games' key members, and is

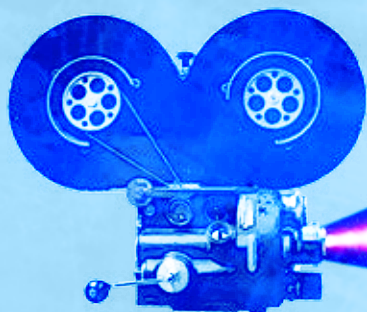
responsible for their smash hit sci-fi combat game *Gates of Antares*.

He told us: "When I left Games Workshop, I had the opportunity to resume projects I had put on hold thirty years previously. I always wanted a more action-packed sci-fi game and 40K by then was very old and creaky. I understand they've recently de-creaked it a bit. But essentially it was a game designed in the 1980s and I felt we could do something better. It just seemed a natural thing to do."

Rick concludes, "Finding good playtesters is hard. In terms of games design, there's nothing challenging in it, I've been doing it most of my life. It's a messy design, but it's messy by design. It's all fun in its way."

You can find out more about WARLORD GAMES on their website, warlordgames.com.





INDEPENDENTS DAY

by Michael Coldwell

CHRIS RODLEY

Over the last 35 years, filmmaker and author CHRIS RODLEY has chronicled the lives of pop culture icons as diverse as David Lynch, Dirk Bogarde, Sir Tom Jones, and Pink Floyd. His latest feature documentary returns to the start of his career to face a personal hero who became something of a demon to Rodley - the legendary star of *THE PRISONER*, Patrick McGoochan. The result is *IN MY MIND*, now released as part of Network's new 50th Anniversary Prisoner box set, which centres on Rodley's extraordinary encounter with the actor while attempting to make his very first documentary, *SIX INTO ONE: THE PRISONER FILE*, which aired on Channel 4 in 1984.

STARBURST: How did you start out as a filmmaker?

Chris Rodley: It came out of what I suppose was career crisis management. I was running the ICA cinema back in 1983 and I'd never made any telly. I didn't get on with the director at the ICA and I knew I was probably for the chop. I remember standing on the platform at Finsbury Park underground station thinking: what am I going to do? He's going to get rid of me, what do I know about? Honest to God, I didn't know about anything else that I could do. But I'd written about *The Prisoner* before and I knew that Channel 4 were looking to do something on it. I'd gone to Paris on ICA business to try and buy the distribution rights to a film from the director Peter Brook. I met him but I didn't get the deal. So I went into a bar called La Palette on Rue de Seine and wrote down what I guess was a documentary treatment. It was five pages long and I sent it to Channel 4. Two days later they called me up and said, "We're going to make it, but you don't know anything about making documentaries, do you?" I said, "No I don't". So they said, "don't worry, we're going to put you with a director and all will be well".

You flew to America to interview Patrick McGoochan, who had agreed to take part and had already scouted an empty house to use as a setting. But things started going wrong from the start - why?

I just didn't know enough about making films to take control. I should have looked into the monitor more as we were shooting. It was my dream to do this, I should have had more confidence, but I didn't feel like I could tell the director what to do or the cameraman how to light it properly - so I didn't. And I was pissing myself anyway thinking: I've still got to interview this guy! I just wasn't paying attention.

It's fascinating to see how quickly Patrick McGoochan takes control and starts 'directing' it himself.

The director I had on it completely abdicated responsibility, he didn't know how to deal with it. Nice guy, actually

Image: Melissa Larner



IN MY MIND

Image: Melissa Larner



Image: Melissa Larner



- apart from the distressed leather jacket and the designer stubble - but he completely abdicated because he couldn't handle it. And the local crew we used, they didn't know what to do either. You can tell from the footage - it's badly shot, the sound is crap, it's rubbish quality and I was too nervous to do anything about it!

A steep learning curve for you?

As horrible as McGoochan was to me, in a way, he taught me so much. I can say that about two people because I also made a film about Dirk Bogarde. They were both really, *really* difficult but I feel like I learned more from those two people in the short time I was with them than in my entire lifetime. Patrick literally read me the riot act about how to do my job, which was fine because I didn't know what I was doing. When we started the actual interview, at one point he looked up and saw that I was looking down at my next question and he just exploded! He said, "When I look

up, I don't want to see you looking down! Look me in the eye, don't take your eyes off me! I need someone to perform to; I need a focus, so don't EVER do that!" I mean, he was literally raging at me. So, I've never done it since. Thirty-five years since and I've never looked down in interviews. I just memorise it, I don't look away from people just in case. It was a really steep learning curve but I have a lot to thank him for in a weird way.

You left the camera running to get as much material as you could from that first session with McGoochan. The footage in *In My Mind* conveys an extraordinarily tense atmosphere. What was the worst moment for you?

I hadn't smoked for three years, I'd given up. That first morning, McGoochan said to the cameraman (because the director had gone missing at that point), "We're going to move the camera into the next room and you're going to get a pick-up shot of me". Now, the cameraman thought he had just been

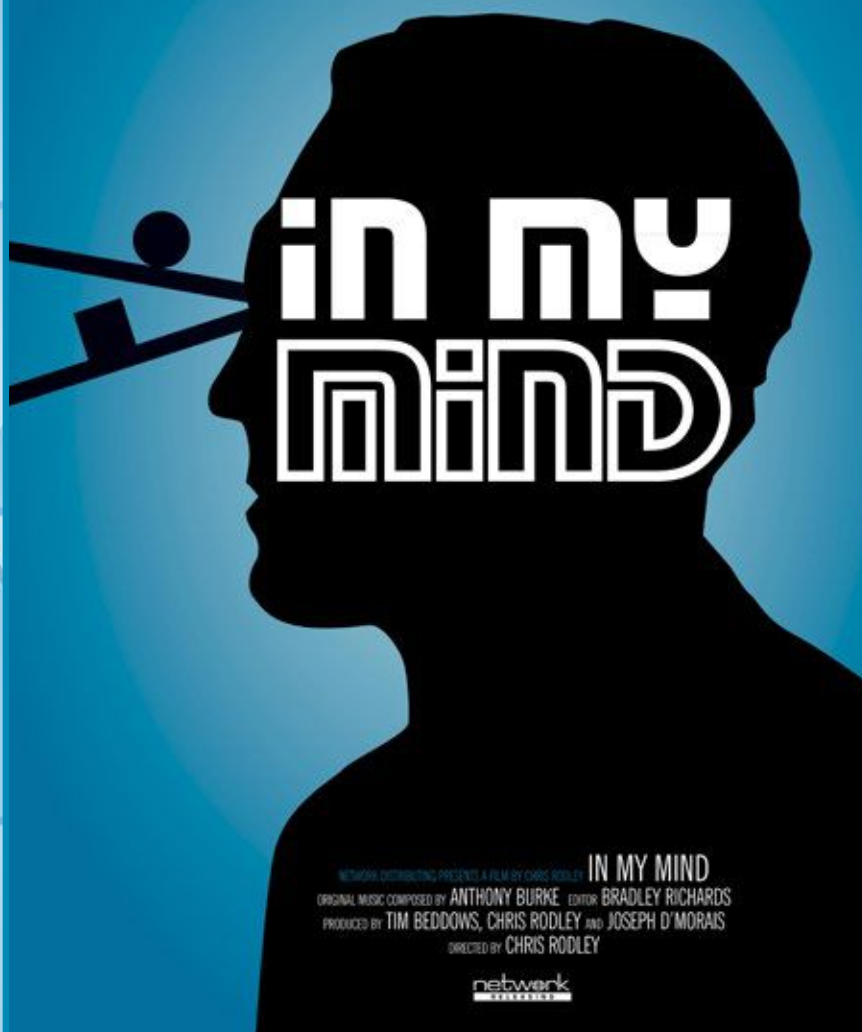
booked to do a 'talking head' interview. That was the job, we all thought. But Patrick had started making this sequence. I remember the cameraman was smoking a Kent cigarette, this horrible dry white thing, and when Patrick started barking orders to move into the next room the cameraman handed it to me and said "take this!" so he could use his hands to move the camera. I just took a puff. I didn't feel dizzy, it was just like going home. At that moment, I could see everything going to pieces in front of my eyes. That was horrible, that feeling of 'this is my first film and it's going to be my last'. My hero was so angry and upset with us all and I didn't blame him, the cameraman didn't know what he was doing and where was the director? It's a horrible feeling when you lose control. Rarely do you feel that in your life, but I truly felt it then.

McGoochan demanded, and you eventually agreed, to scrap that first attempt and re-interview him at a new hillside location. This



GETTING INFORMATION OUT OF PATRICK MCGOOHAN
WAS NEVER GOING TO BE EASY...

NETWORK DISTRIBUTING PRESENTS A FILM BY CHRIS RODLEY



was the footage that was eventually used in your original film. He seemed much more relaxed second time around...

We never showed a frame of that first interview because he tried to buy it back off us. I said to him, "we can't sell it back to you, but we won't show it". So it's a bit odd seeing it now as part of this new film because I think it's a better interview than either he or I remembered it. As for the second interview on the hill, yes, he's more relaxed, but it's not as revealing as when he's angry and irritated with me and trying not to say stuff.

In My Mind also covers the astonishing encounter you had with McGooohan in Paris after he'd viewed the final edit of *Six Into One: The Prisoner File* just prior to transmission...

California had been bad but that was the next level of bad. He shouted at us in Paris for eighteen hours straight. I mean, you want to please Daddy, don't you? You want Daddy

to say, 'job well done, son'! Well, Daddy had now seen it and he *hated* it. It was literally eighteen hours of him raging at us. And at some point, I remember that the veins on his neck were standing up! We got thrown out of several cafes and ended up on the Champs-Élysées at 3am in the morning and he was still screaming at us! I can't even think now what it was that he screamed at us about for eighteen hours...

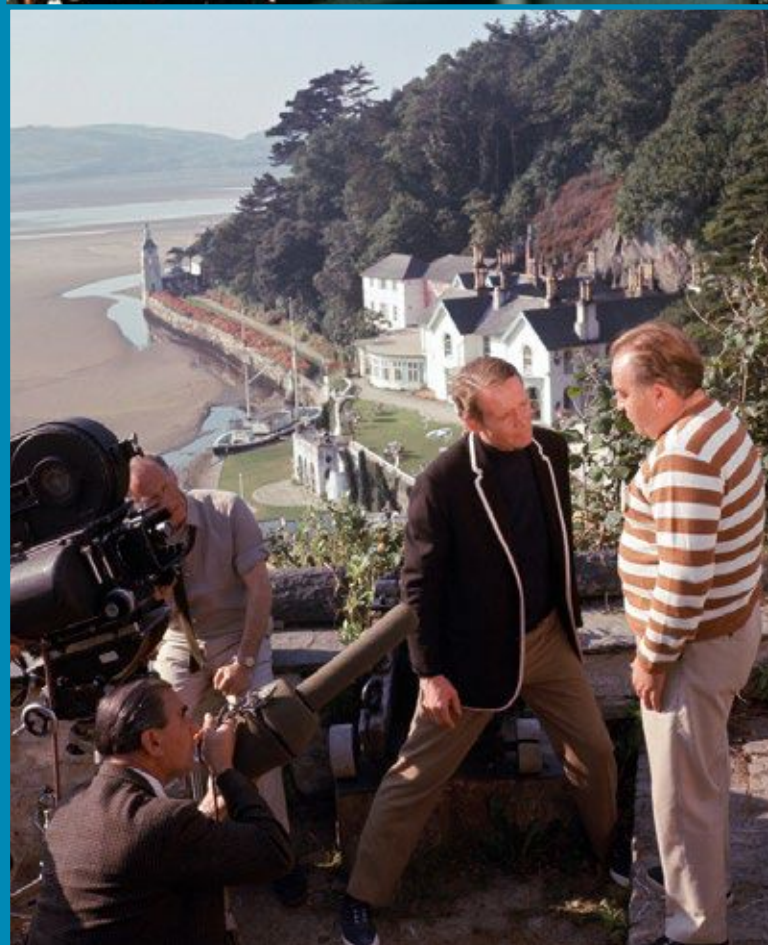
This is starting to sound like a treatment for a comedy-drama with great international locations. What was he doing in Paris?

He was there shooting *Baby: Secret of the Lost Legend* for Disney and was doing some soundstage work or post-synching. At the end of this long night with him, we went back to the hotel where I was staying and he shouted, "What room are you in? What's your room number?" So I gave him my room number and went up and sat on the side of the bed and waited for him to come up and punch me out.

I thought 'he's gonna come up and deck me, so be a man, don't go to bed and wait for him'. But he never came up. The next morning, he delivered a lovely present. I'd happened to casually mention to him that I liked Schlitz beer, which was a very horrible sweet root beer. So there was this igloo thing there for me containing six cans of Schlitz as a sort of present after he'd almost beaten me up!

You must have felt like one of the many No. 2 characters who crossed swords with him in *The Prisoner*?

Yeah, but if you could choose your bully, he wasn't the worst. I got bullied quite a lot at school and in that respect, he wasn't a bad bully. But I don't think I've met anyone who was so *conflicted* in my life. I'm trying to imagine where the conflict was coming from and I think it was his religion. If you're really handsome and you really are the highest paid TV actor in Britain (as McGooohan famously had been



in the 1960s), you must get a lot of temptation. I don't know if he ever gave in, or how many times he gave in, but he was completely struggling with himself all the time. There's actually something really great about being with someone like that, who is a thousand percent *all the time*. It's exhausting, because most people are on 20% but this guy was on a thousand, *never letting up*. It's kind of like a drug being with someone like that and you sort of miss it afterwards.

Not a great one for small talk, then?

There was no casual chat, forget it. One of the things I love about being in Ireland when I go there is when you go into a pub, they talk to you about big stuff, straight off. It's not casual, it's life and death. Go into that pub three nights in a row and you're their best friend, but it's all about really serious stuff. What's interesting is the *struggle, the getting there*. If you've got there - fuck you, you're not interesting anymore. I kind of agree, the struggle is the interesting bit. I think Patrick was struggling with all kinds of shit. When we first met, almost as an opening gambit, he said to me in this really intense way, "*Chris! Have you got a girlfriend?*" I said yes, I did, she's from Poland. Then he said, "*When you get married, don't you think it's important to be a virgin?*" I didn't even know the man and this was almost the first thing he said to me...

What was your final contact with him?

The day the film went out on Channel 4 he called me about twenty times to beg me to stop them from showing it, as if I had any power to stop it, you know? This was the early days of Channel 4, remember. My cost controller who worked there used to go kite flying with me and she would tell me these horror stories about films that were never delivered, hundreds of thousands of pounds that went unaccounted for, production companies who just spent all their money on leather jackets and cocaine... it was *mad*. Derek Jarman went into Channel 4 and said he'd kill himself if they didn't fund his film *Blue*. He used to go there and say to [then Channel 4 boss] Jeremy Isaacs, "*I'm going to jump out of that fucking window if you don't give me the money!*" So they'd give him the money. Some great things came out of it, of course, but I don't think *Six Into One: The Prisoner File* was one of them. A for intention, Z for achievement!

***In My Mind* has been an opportunity to go back to the source material and get that achievement rating back up. What would Patrick McGoochan have thought of your new film, do you think?**

Patrick? He wouldn't have liked it. He might have liked some of the mischievousness of it. He might have thought some of it was funny. But overall, no, he wouldn't have liked it!

IN MY MIND is available on DVD and Blu-ray from Network Distributing. You can read our review in **STARBURST** #442.

THE LATEST BIG
SCREEN GENRE
RELEASES REVIEWED
AND RATED

REVIEWS



JIGSAW

CERT: 18 / **DIRECTORS:** MICHAEL SPIERIG, PETER SPIERIG / **SCREENPLAY:** PETER GOLDFINGER, JOSH STOLBERG / **STARRING:** MATT PASSMORE, TOBIN BELL, CALLUM KEITH RENNIE, HANNAH EMILY ANDERSON / **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW

It's been seven years since the last set of Jigsaw murders. For seven whole years, the mantle has lain dormant, the games come to an end, our cinemas at last free of Tobin Bell's posthumous pontificating. We had assumed that Lionsgate would wait at least ten years before the inevitable reboot. Patience not being a virtue of the movie executive (there's a Saw sequel to be had in there somewhere), the franchise re-emerges, following in the footsteps of Logan, Rocky, and Rambo, with the killer's name in the title and everything.

Still, seven years is long enough for audiences to have forgotten the many intricacies of the Saw timeline, and Jigsaw goes back to basics, dumping Amanda, the Hoffman saga and even Saw 3D's cliffhanger. There's a new game afoot, a fresh set of dead bodies, and two cops trying to decode the riddle. Copycat? Hitherto unseen acolyte? John Kramer arisen from the dead? We saw his very dead body sliced open for autopsy in Saw IV, and it's to Jigsaw's credit that audiences still semi-expect to see the sanctimonious old coot resurrected.

That's about the only credit Jigsaw does get, though. Its central mystery is the worst ever concocted in the franchise's history, playing second fiddle to the worst game Jigsaw (?) has ever played. As five strangers compete for their lives in a booby-trapped old barn, their bodies pop up all around town for two comically serious cops to track

down and investigate. Whodunit? Unless you're counting the John Kramer zombie theory, it's a choice between four potential candidates, two of whom are only in the film to play blindingly obvious red herrings.

The traps are fine enough, if marred by obvious CGI, but this is the weakest story yet. Its plot twists are telegraphed and blatantly stolen from previous entries, the mechanics of the game ridiculously strained. It plays like a Saw fan film or pilot for a particularly bad TV show, lacking the viciousness or smarts that has always typified even the franchise's worst entries. None of its tricks are its own, and the gratuitous Tobin Bell cameo feels forced and silly. It doesn't even look like a proper Saw movie, being overlit and surprisingly lacking in gore. There's

nothing wrong with taking the franchise in a new direction, but this one looks cheap and tacky, like a straight to DVD/Netflix imitator.

For fans and newcomers alike, Jigsaw is a disappointment: this reboot has the worst story, the worst characters, the worst writing, the worst twists and the worst traps. Not only is this the worst Saw movie, it's also one of the worst horror films in recent memory. Frankly, it's just the worst.

JOEL HARLEY

EXPECTED ★★★★★★★★ 7

ACTUAL ★★★★★★★★ 4





HAPPY DEATH DAY

CERT: 15 / **DIRECTOR:** CHRISTOPHER LANDON / **SCREENPLAY:** SCOTT LOBDELL / **STARRING:** JESSICA ROTHE, ISRAEL BROUSSARD, RUBY MODINE, CHARLES AITKEN / **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW

Groundhog Day was already pretty traumatic when Bill Murray went through it. Widely regarded as one of the greatest comedies of all time, Harold Ramis' classic went to some pretty dark places. Namely, quite a lot of suicide. Now, imagine Groundhog Day, but with a serial killer. Such is Tree Glebman's lot in life, forced to relive the day of her murder over and over again, brutally slaughtered by a masked killer night after night. The same night, though.

Horror fans will come for the slasher affectations, but stay for the rest. With a cast of very pretty young things on a bright, poppy American college campus, Happy Death Day is the best *Scream* pastiche since the late nineties. Thankfully not overdoing it on the meta humour (that Bill Murray movie only gets one mention but it's in the film's best gag), the kills are inventive and fun, gnarly but not so traumatic that they'll undermine the humour or the heart. And it's that heart that is Happy Death Day's strongest suit.

The film's genuinely endearing leads paper over the cracks in the story and slightly rubbish whodunit; Jessica Rothe and Israel Broussard have great chemistry, and it's a lot of fun watching the pair play variations on the same scene again and again from different emotional angles. As Tree, Rothe has a lot to do and deal with, and even if her Mean-Girl-to-Final-Girl arc never quite rings true, she takes the gamut of emotions in her stride - particularly the all-important sadness and hurt at her character's centre. There's a triumphalism to it that's almost on a par with the mighty cult tearjerker *The Final Girls*.

And it's that which sees us through the film's missteps, such as the shonky manner in which it attempts to induce stakes (each of Tree's deaths has a lasting

effect upon her body, making her weaker every time she 'respawns') without it ever really playing into the plot afterwards, or the paper-thin characterisation elsewhere. The writing by Scott Lobdell is solid and his intentions are good, but the gender politics - most notably some interactions between the film's women - could use some work.

But for many, the whole thing will be one massive bone of contention. Without victim blaming: seriously, how hard is it to not die for 24 hours? Drive out of state! Get on an aeroplane or something! But for others, it will make for great after-cinema discussion - how would you survive your

Happy Death Day?

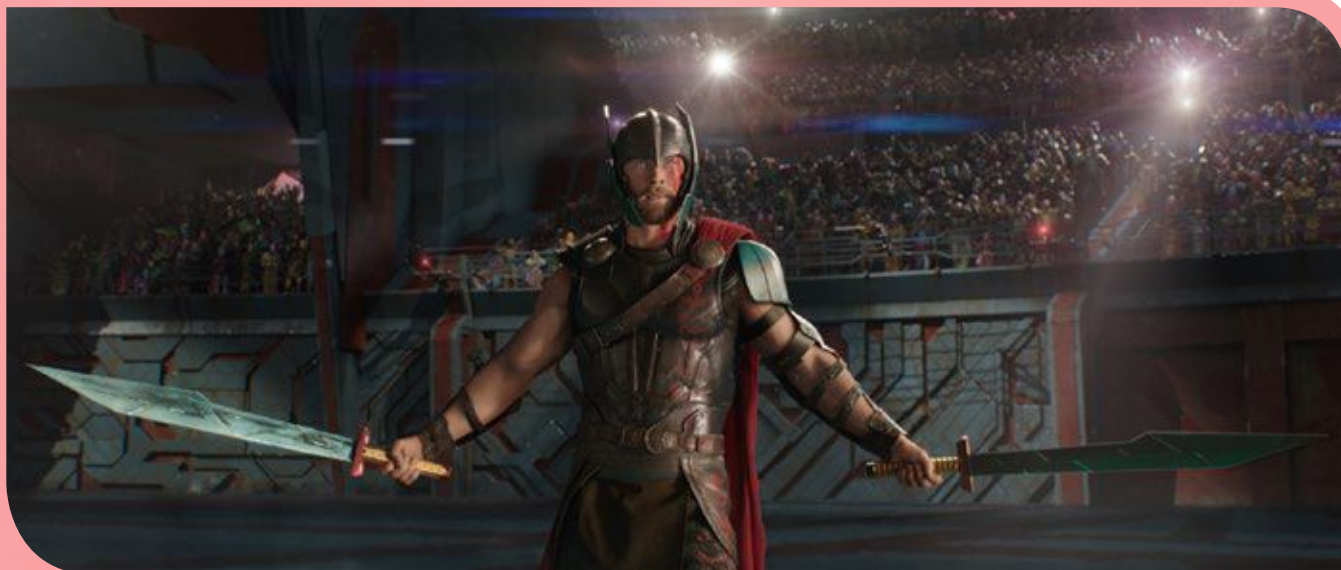
The film has its share of flaws, plot holes (and a terrible villain), but it's so much fun that these are easily overlooked. For its emotional beats, central performances and sheer bravado, this is a charming little comedy horror number that fans will take great pleasure in playing over and over again.

JOEL HARLEY

EXPECTED + + + + + + + + + + 8

ACTUAL + + + + + + + + + + 7





THOR: RAGNAROK

CERT: 12A / DIRECTOR: TAIKA WAITITI / SCREENPLAY: ERIC PEARSON, CRAIG KYLE, CHRISTOPHER YOST/ STARRING: CHRIS HEMSWORTH, MARK RUFFALO, TOM HIDDLESTON, JEFF GOLDBLUM/ RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

There is a moment in this movie that sums up the experience of watching it perfectly. Suddenly sucked through a dimensional portal in space to the lair of a genocidal DJ-ing despot, our hero experiences a cosmic version of the notorious, kiddie-scaring chocolate river boat ride from Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory. As a scene, it is garishly colourful, thrillingly scary and very funny indeed. By the time you realise the music swelling up behind it on the soundtrack is that classic Wonka ditty 'Pure Imagination' by Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley, your mind is melting at the sheer chutzpah of the joyous thing that is Thor: Ragnarok. The best part? You know that another scene like this will be along very shortly.

It's fair to say that Thor hasn't had the smoothest parade around the Marvel cinematic paddock compared to his Avengers colleagues. Kenneth Branagh's successful, if (ahem) low-key first chapter in 2011 was a tonally mixed bag that established Chris Hemsworth as an excellent Thor but never quite found a comfort zone between comedy and action. Things were not helped by leading lady Natalie Portman giving off the distinct aura of someone who'd walked onto the movie by mistake and was sticking around just to be polite. She looked even less impressed to be in Thor: The Dark World, Alan Taylor's 2013 sequel, which wasn't half bad but lacked Branagh's lightness of touch. By the standards of the MCU, it was pretty ordinary, which is hardly a description the vigorous, party-loving, beer-swilling Thor should ever be associated with.

So, welcome to the party he deserves. The new film begins with Thor escaping the jaws of death via a Led Zep-backed battle sequence that concludes with Marvel's greatest ever main title reveal. Arriving back on Asgard, he finds his brother Loki (Tom Hiddleston) living the high life, having packed their old dad Odin (Anthony Hopkins) off to an old people's home in New York, like the good son he is. Travelling to Earth, the estranged brothers find their Dad's care home has been demolished, so enlist the assistance of some Sorcerer bloke they come across to track the old duffer down. When they do, he tips them

off to defend Asgard against the outrageously powerful Hela who, in the form of Cate Blanchett, is quite possibly the most kick-ass lady the MCU has ever seen. En route to stop her, things get serious, then seriously funny, when the brothers Odinson find themselves in the disco-stadium court of the Grandmaster (Goldblum, in stealth Goldblum mode). There, Thor gets a haircut and is enslaved to do show-battle with his old mate the Hulk, who has been having so much fun on the cosmic WWE circuit, he's lost interest in turning back into Bruce Banner. Thor does not have any sort of coherent plan to deal with any of this. But, by thunder - he does!

Thor: Ragnarok (a tragically Portman-free zone) delivers on the promise of its 'Team Thor' teasers and recent trailers to be a full-blown riot. New Zealander Taika Waititi is an inspired choice of director, ensuring we're never far away from the next dramatic drop-kick, spot-on punchline, or moment of visual splendour. He has a willing partner in Chris Hemsworth, who is clearly having the time of his life with a script that nails the sheer, unbridled exuberance of

his character. Hemsworth's buddy act with the wisecracking CGI Hulk is sublime and having Mark Ruffalo's frazzled Banner (once Hulk changes back) in the mix is every bit as brilliant an idea as you hoped it would be. But in a film of show-stopping, laugh-out-loud performances (including some gobsmacking cameos we won't spoil), even an on-fire Jeff Goldblum is out-funnned by director Waititi himself, who brings the house down as chilled-out rock monster and would-be sidekick Korg. His line about his mate Doug is the greatest deadpan of the year. You'll know it when you hear it.

Thor: Ragnarok is an awesomely entertaining premier league win for Thor that fizzies with inventive energy. Nine years and seventeen movies into the MCU, that's got to be worth some serious flagons of ale.

MICHAEL COLDWELL

EXPECTED ★★★★★★★★ 8

ACTUAL ★★★★★★★★ 9





best of 2017

film of the year



arrival
also on blu-ray



beyond the gates



i, daniel blake
also on blu-ray



don't breathe
also on blu-ray

free fire
also on blu-ray



get out
also on blu-ray

the girl with all the gifts
also on blu-ray



hunt for the wilderpeople
also on blu-ray



john wick: chapter 2
also on blu-ray



i am not a serial killer
also on blu-ray



kong: skull island
also on blu-ray

kubo & the two strings
also on blu-ray



the **LEGO batman** movie
also on blu-ray



the **love witch**
also on blu-ray



morgan
also on blu-ray



logan
also on blu-ray



raw
also on blu-ray



prevenge
also on blu-ray



split
also on blu-ray



seoul station
also on blu-ray



train to busan
also on blu-ray



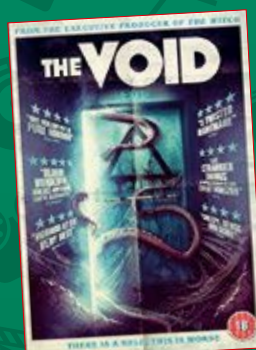
the **transfiguration**
also on blu-ray



under the shadow



the **void**
also on blu-ray



the
fopp
100

the fopp list

get the lowdown on the best new films
in this month's edition of the fopp list,
free magazine in-store now

while stocks last



foppofficial

#gettofopp

fopp.com

fopp stores

bristol college green
cambridge sidney st
edinburgh rose st
glasgow union st & byres rd
london covent garden
manchester brown st
nottingham broadmarsh
shopping centre
oxford gloucester green

REVIEWS

THE LATEST HOME
VIDEO RELEASES
REVIEWED & RATED



TERRAHAWKS: THE COMPLETE SERIES

DVD + BD / CERT: U / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: VARIOUS / STARRING: DENISE BRYER, JEREMY HITCHEN, WINDSOR DAVIES, ROBBIE STEVENS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Even the most furiously ardent Gerry Anderson fan would be hard-pressed to argue that Terrahawks, the 1980s series that saw the Master return, more or less, to the puppet world of his Supermarionation hits from the 1960s (now rechristened Supermacromation due to an entirely different style of puppeteering), is anywhere near Anderson at his best. Bluntly put, Terrahawks doesn't - and can't - hold a candle to the likes of Stingray, Thunderbirds, and Captain Scarlet; although it's certainly less boring than Joe 90 and significantly less bizarre than The Secret Service. Times and tastes had changed since the heyday of Century 21 in the 1960s and when Gerry joined forces with ambitious businessman Christopher Burr to craft a new series in the style of his 'greatest hits' for a 1980s audience, Lew Grade's deep pockets, providing the generous budgets that made Thunderbirds et al. so vital, were long gone as were many of the creative behind-the-scenes talents he'd worked with for the better part of a decade.

Terrahawks - all thirty-nine episodes of the series, previously released by Network, now gathered together on this impressive Blu-ray box set generously packed with a variety of special features and documentaries previously available on the individual season box sets - sees Gerry Anderson returning to the themes and flavours of the show with which he made his name (although, famously, he remained frustrated by his failure to break out of kid's TV and into proper grown-up film and TV making). The elite fighting

force known as the Terrahawks, led by the cloned Tiger Ninestein, defend the earth from attack by the hideous cackling Zelda (an android from the planet Guk) and her ghastly offspring Jungstar and Cystar and their menagerie of frankly ludicrous monster allies. The Terrahawks themselves are based in a huge country house in South America and have at their disposal a fleet of vessels including the orbiting Spacehawk commanded by Lieutenant Hiro, the space transporter Treehawk (it emerges, Thunderbird-style, from a tree that conveniently splits open), the bulkier Battlehawk (the house folds open to allow the ship to lift-off) and its detachable Terrahawk command centre (Ninestein's personal ship), and the Hawkwing, a fighter aircraft that launches, like Stingray, through an underwater porthole, and is usually piloted by part time pop star Kate Kestrel and her co-pilot Lieutenant Hawkeye. None of these

vessels are as iconic as their illustrious forebears, but the modelwork which brings them to life, whilst not as detailed as, for example, the iconic Thunderbird ships, surprisingly manages to stand up to the savage scrutiny of 21st century high definition.

Early episodes of Terrahawks are, admittedly, a bit of a slog. Coupled with special effects that just don't have the sheer class of the best of Derek Meddings' work in the 1960s, the actual puppetry style takes some getting used to. Supermacromation sees the puppets operated from below, which allows for a greater range of movement and expression, yet there's a rather disconcerting jerkiness in their movements which is at times as distracting as the sometimes painfully-visible wires from the gantry-operated marionettes of the Century 21 days. The stories are drab and formulaic too, but the show quickly finds its feet and its strengths, emphasising the absurdity of its very existence with scripts that become almost outrageously tongue-in-cheek. There are gags aimed squarely at the older audience and a wonderfully ripe vocal performance from Windsor Davies as Sergeant Major Zero, commander of the Terrahawks' army of often-bumbling circular robot Zeroids, probably the show's most memorable and engaging creation.

Watched in the right frame of mind, secure in the memory that this is Gerry Anderson returning to his roots long after his heyday, Terrahawks is huge tongue-in-cheek fun and, although Gerry would move on to the better, but more criminally mistreated Captain Scarlet CGI reboot, it serves as an enjoyable, if slightly bittersweet, full stop to the great man's life of adventure in the world of puppet science fiction.

Extras: *The Terrahawks story / Featurettes / FX trims / Audio episodes / Image galleries.*

★★★★★★★★★ 7





ALIEN CONTACT: OUTER SPACE

VOD / CERT: E / DIRECTOR: J. MICHAEL LONG / STARRING: PHILIP GARDINER, O. H. KRILL, J. MICHAEL LONG / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

As science fiction fans, we're used to watching the skies and wondering 'what if...', but there are plenty of people who do indeed believe in life outside our own atmosphere. There's no real reason why we should be

alone in the universe, and this documentary may well convince the naysayers to think again.

Alien Contact: Outer Space is a spry look at the measures man has taken to attempt to discover proof of life elsewhere. Whether

it's through space exploration, satellites and probes or radio telescopes sending signals for our extra-terrestrial friends to hear, we have never given up hope. What this film reveals, however, is that we've received just as much from unidentified places.

One may expect the reporting of these occurrences to be delivered in an alarmist, sensationalist manner, but this documentary takes a very different approach. It's almost academic in tone, recounting facts and figures and actually playing recordings that are purported to be from unknown outer space sources. Now, viewers will get different reactions to all this information, and as someone who sits in the 'sceptical but hopeful' camp, this writer was drawn in enough to think about some of the stories, particularly when it comes to the video footage of something of unknown origin passing in the background of the ill-fated SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket that exploded prior to a static fire test in 2016. There is certainly something there in the film, and it definitely doesn't look natural. The same can't be said

of the message received over radio frequencies in the late seventies, which sounds like dialogue from a corny low budget fifties film.

Tinfoil hats aside, Alien Contact: Outer Space is an entertaining watch. The narration might be a little dry for the casual viewer who may crave the sensationalism and conspiracy theories, but it comes across as factual and earnest and all the more believable for it. At a little over an hour, it also doesn't outstay its welcome, but might well leave you wanting to delve further into the abyss of space and hope that one day we'll know for certain if we're really not alone. Or perhaps we're being watched just as closely, our unknown friends looking on in disbelief (or even pity) at what's happening on Earth. We might never know if the truth is indeed out there, but thanks to documentaries like this, we can always hope.

ANIMAL JOHNS

★★★★★★★★ 7



BLOOD SIMPLE (1984)

DVD + BD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: JOEL & ETHAN COEN / STARRING: JOHN GETZ, FRANCES MCDORMAND, DAN HEDAYA, M. EMMET WALSH / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

One of several key films from the 1980s that defined the decade in terms of craftsmanship and technical virtuosity, the Coen Brothers' debut film Blood Simple has been given a 4K makeover supervised by both the directors and Director of Cinematography Barry Sonnenfeld, one of several key talents emerging from this film that went onto greater success later on, alongside Frances McDormand, who married Joel Coen in 1984 and appeared in several key films of theirs, including Fargo (1996), for which she won a Best Actress Oscar.

Bartender Ray (John Getz) and Abby (McDormand) are having an affair behind the back of his boss (and Abby's hubby), Julian Marty (Dan Hedaya), who in turn

has hired a private investigator (M. Emmet Walsh) to follow them and to get a bigger sense of where all is going south. It's unnecessary, as Marty is well aware Abby is playing away. Before long, though, jealousy between the group has intensified to the point that Marty wants the investigator to go one step further...

Shot in Austin and around Texas in 1983, but not released in the US until the early part of 1985 (the UK got it in the Spring of that year when the critical acclaim emerged), Blood Simple is still a sharp and deliciously dark noir that encompasses all of the key attributes that helped make Lawrence Kasdan's Body Heat another winner at the start of that decade.

Right from the outset, with M.

Emmet Walsh's voice-over setting the scene over a Chainsaw-esque montage of rural imagery, it is a still highly original piece of Deep South drama, helped along by future and ongoing long-term Coen collaborator Carter Burwell's sparse yet involving score.

The script is as tight as it ever was, keeping attention throughout with little clues and subtleties that can easily be missed if you are not paying attention - this film demands focus from the very first frame.

Barry Sonnenfeld's camerawork is another unforgettable strength of the film, particularly his framing of the Texas landscape and some key individual moments on the open road that evoke the same sense of unease and discomfort that defined Steven Spielberg's Duel (1971).

The performances of the cast are first-rate, particularly Walsh, who offsets the dark

tone with some quirky humour, but the interaction between Getz, McDormand, and Hedaya and the evident knowledge of each other's illicit acts adds to the overwhelming sense that something is (as the tagline on the original UK theatrical Release poster stated) dead in the heart of Texas.

Much comment was made about the Coen Brothers' association with Sam Raimi when Joel worked as an editor on the original Evil Dead in 1982 and the comparison in style between that and Blood Simple. However, that is where the similarity ends, as their debut film remains a landmark of not only the period, but also the template for everything that followed in their subsequent filmography.

JOHN HIGGINS

★★★★★★★★ 8





ASH VS. EVIL DEAD SEASON 2

DVD + BD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: VARIOUS / SCREENPLAY: VARIOUS / STARRING: BRUCE CAMPBELL, DANA DELORENZO, RAY SANTIAGO, LUCY LAWLESS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The Evil Dead Trilogy is for many one of the greatest cult franchises of all time; it made Ash Williams (and Bruce Campbell) an instant icon and Sam Raimi a prolific film director. In 2015, Raimi boldly revived Ash Williams

on the small screen, extending his adventures against the book that never seems to leave him alone: the Necronomicon.

Ash Vs. Evil Dead picks up with Ash, along with his comrades in arms, Kelly (Dana

DeLorenzo) and Pablo (Ray Santiago), living in Jacksonville after striking a deal with Ruby (Lucy Lawless), the immortal writer of the Necronomicon, for a quiet life if she can unleash some demons. Unfortunately, said demons have turned on Ruby and now she needs Ash's help to vanquish them. The trail takes them back to Elk Grove, Michigan, Ash's hometown, where Ash catches up with his estranged father, Brock Williams (Lee Majors), and the other people he left behind, but the Deadites are waiting with ideas of their own for the Necronomicon.

What makes this series excellent is that it did all its character (re)establishing in the first series, allowing the second series to be a gleaming tribute to the Evil Dead Trilogy: the Michigan location, the appearance of Ted Raimi, the 'evil force' travelling shots and several other key Evil Dead cameos (we won't spoil the surprises) all blend with the development of the story, which feels like a natural successor to the series. We see Ash

contemplate what his life has done to the people he left behind in Michigan, but this doesn't stop him having to behead and disembowel any Deadite getting in the way, with Pablo and Kelly being developed strongly in their own rights to have their own problems running alongside Ash's. All this coupled with a strong set of behind-the-scenes features and audio commentaries makes the second series of Ash Vs. Evil Dead the strongest continuation of the franchise so far.

NICK BLACKSHAW

★★★★★★★★★★ 9



IT COMES AT NIGHT

DVD + BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: TREY EDWARD SHULTS / STARRING: JOEL EDGERTON, CHRISTOPHER ABBOTT, CARMEN EJOGO, KELVIN HARRISON JR, RILEY KEOUGH / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Superficially, It Comes At Night appears to be a fairly traditional, unexceptional, low budget character piece in which a group of edgy, ill-matched survivors of a global apocalypse struggle to stay alive in a hostile and unfamiliar world. But in truth there's actually quite a bit more to it and, frustratingly, quite a bit less too.

We're in a cold, brutal world ravaged by some unspecified disease. Travis (Harrison Jr.), teenage son of brittle survivors Paul (Edgerton) and Sarah (Ejogo), watches in numbed horror as his father puts his grandfather out of his disease-ridden misery, throws the body

into a shallow grave and sets it alight. The next night their secure home, deep in isolated woodland, is breached by Will (Abbott) searching for supplies for his family, unaware that the house is occupied. Suspicion, paranoia and violence are never far away in this cruel new world, but eventually Paul decides to trust Will and he invites him, his wife and young son into their sanctuary. For a while they seem to get along well, slipping into an affable, private routine. But soon the cracks begin to show when it seems that Will might not have been entirely open and honest and that there might just be something out there in the woods...

It Comes at Night is, as a title, a bit of a misnomer. It's not really much of a spoiler to reveal that no, it doesn't come at night - but then that might depend on what your perspective is on what 'it' actually might be. And this is a film that allows its audience to walk away with lots of questions unanswered. What, if anything, is in the woods? What really went on during the night that causes the group's relationship to start to disintegrate? What happened to the family dog? What secrets do Will and his family hide and what's the truth about their journey so far? This is a film which has no interest in answering many of the questions it sets, which either makes it a sloppy, frustrating experience or a daring, atmospheric, relentlessly grim apocalyptic drama which, perhaps, reflects reality in that we don't always get all the answers and that some things are better left unknown and unsaid. What's fairly certain, though, is that despite its juddering pace and narrative ambiguity, It Comes at Night is a disturbing look at human nature and it's a film which will leave you pondering its meaning and, perhaps, its purpose long after you walk away from it. It's a moody, shadowy film powered by a glowering performance from the increasingly impressive Joel Edgerton (and with an excellent turn from Harrison Jr. as troubled son Travis) and with

its emphasis firmly on character and story. The exact nature of the apocalypse is kept vague in this small, intimate story of a handful of jittery, nervous people doing all they can to survive in a grave new world driven by suspicion, fear and mistrust.

It Comes at Night won't suit all tastes; in tone it's not entirely dissimilar to 2015's underrated Arnold Schwarzenegger zombie drama Maggie in that it's a difficult, angular, uncomfortable film aiming for the arthouse audience rather than the multiplex masses. It Comes at Night demands that its audience works with it and the end result, whilst not always entirely satisfactory, is never less than compelling and highly watchable.

Extras: Director commentary / Human Nature - creating It Comes at Night feature

PAUL MOUNT

★★★★★★★★★★ 7





WILLARD/BEN (1972/1972) LIMITED EDITION BOX SET

BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTORS: DANIEL MANN, PHIL KARLSON / SCREENPLAY: GILBERT RALSTON / STARRING: BRUCE DAVISON, ERNEST BORGNINE, ELSA LANCHESTER, LEE MONTGOMERY / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Your awareness of Daniel Mann's 1971 horror film Willard and Phil Karlson's 1972 sequel Ben probably stems from the repeat plays over the last forty five years of Michael Jackson's title song of the latter, and possibly the loosely based remake of the original film starring Crispin Glover.

Second Sight has put together a brand new 4K/HD transfer respectively of each film with special features and they look fantastic in this case.

One suitable option to view the films is as a two-part mini-series form, as like the original Carpenter Halloween and Halloween II, Ben takes up where Willard left off. Seen today, both may well be of more interest to older viewers and cult fans of vintage horror.

Willard tells of Willard Stiles (Bruce Davison), about as nerdy and geeky as they come, whose boss (Ernest Borgnine) has stolen the business from his

deceased father, not to mention an overbearing family who are as bullying as he is, led by mother Henrietta (the original Bride Of Frankenstein, Elsa Lanchester). However, in his solace, he makes friends with some rats in the neighbourhood and discovers a newfound power, as well as naming his 'pets', choosing the likes of Socrates and Ben. Before long, he is using this to manipulate them into causing havoc amongst his close circle.

Ben is the tale of Danny (Lee Montgomery) who has discovered Ben and, as a result, his unsavoury relationship becomes a saving grace. However, Ben's cohorts are turning violent and causing all manner of trouble in the neighbourhood...

On balance, the extent at which you will find these horrifying depends on your in-built phobia around rats. If you didn't flinch during that Venice sequence in Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade, when Indy and Elsa fled from explosions and rats escaping, then you probably will find these more fun.

Willard is a strange affair now, as it isn't really that horrifying and the pay-offs at the end are relatively tame. It struggles in what it is trying to be and indeed, some

critics commented on this back on its original release. Performance-wise, Davison and Borgnine are competent and the film also has some appeal for fans of Clint Eastwood, given that his long-term collaborator Sondra Locke makes one of her early appearances in this. Vintage Universal horror fans will no doubt want to see Lanchester in action in one of her last screen roles.

However, Ben is more successful, due to sticking to a Them-style monster narrative and actually having some rather atmospheric moments of tension, thus being more effective as a horror movie. It still lacks some genuine scares, but tries its hardest at least to be more of a genre piece. The title song, though a catchy number, seems out of place in this type of film, but remains one of the best things about the film overall. Family Ties fans can also take pleasure from one of Meredith Baxter's early film roles.

Overall, one for true fans of the films and cult film collectors.

JOHN HIGGINS

+++++ 6



THE SUSPICIOUS DEATH OF A MINOR (1975)

BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: SERGIO MARTINO / SCREENPLAY: ERNESTO GASTALDI, SERGIO MARTINO / STARRING: CLAUDIO CASSINELLI, MEL FERRER, LIA TANZI / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Often mistaken for a giallo film, Sergio Martino's The Suspicious Death of a Minor belongs to the other popular '70s Italian subgenre: politziotteschi films. Gaining popularity around the same time as the giallo film, politziotteschi was essentially the action crime thriller response to the economic, political, and cultural developments at the end of the '60s. Martino, a genre enthusiast with a stream of films in both genres, proved a skilful director with a consummate understanding of mystery filmmaking. Though he arguably doesn't have the respect of other Italian directors of the period, Martino is a

reliable curator of thrillers with a great sense of humour.

Those expecting a giallo will be disappointed. The seediness of Italian giallo is present in the story (underage girls used in the sex trade, murder with a cut-throat razor) but the tone is surprisingly light. It never feels as seedy as Argento's giallos or even the politziotteschi films of other directors. The film eventually becomes a buddy film between a high-ranking secret investigator and a pickpocket. There's a great car chase, crammed with farcical OTT comedy to the point where it feels like it was cut from a Roger Moore Bond film. But the moral compass of the politziotteschi

films was often, like giallo, not pointing true and straight. The Suspicious Death of a Minor is no exception. Sure, its heroes distance themselves from the order of law in order to pursue justice, but they also mug sex workers and treat the women they try to save like trash.

Writer Ernesto Gastaldi has a talent for subtle black humour, using the thriller structure of The Suspicious Death of a Minor to rip the piss out of Italian police officers and put many of his contemporaries to shame with a savvy script. Gastaldi treats his audience like adults, refusing to spell things out in the moment, allowing his character work to talk for itself. Surprises are followed by bold character-defining choices, people have their own consistent moral codes that operate independent of each other, but Gastaldi doesn't get

too bogged down in lecturing us. What he does do is deliver a nicely wound mystery film which pulls off some really dramatic thriller set pieces, not least the dramatic conclusion on board a hollow car-carrying train and a shootout on a rollercoaster.

The Suspicious Death of a Minor is, perhaps problematically, a fun thriller, caught between the alluring action farce of a '70s Bond film and the seedy moral cavern of Italian giallo. Taking aim at every level of Italian culture, Martino and Gastaldi put together a surprisingly enjoyable caper. Sure, the hard-hitting exploitation of a title and subject like that are dismissed early, but as a film it's watchable and nicely put together.

SCOTT CLARK

+++++ 6





MIRACLE MILE (1988)

BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: STEVE DE JARNATT / STARRING: ANTHONY EDWARDS, MARE WINNINGHAM / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Four years after the BBC informed us about sitting under tables and your leg falling off in *Threads*, over in America, nuclear Armageddon was the basis for romantic comedy. Steve de Jarnatt wrote *Miracle Mile* on leaving the American Film Institute and in 1983 *American Film* magazine named it one of Hollywood's ten best unproduced screenplays - but it would be another five years before de Jarnatt finally filmed it,

a flop financially but one with a cult reputation.

It's very entertaining, if oddly judged. Not strictly comedy, nor as intelligent as it needs to be, *Miracle Mile* hints at farce before settling on a relatively straightforward plummet into oblivion.

Starting with Anthony Edwards' Harry Washello finally finding the girl of his dreams, across the first few minutes we're treated to the

circumstances preceding his first date with Julie (Mare Winningham, whose haircut is the most frightening thing in the movie). When their evening is interrupted by Julie's shift at a coffee shop and Harry misses their later rendezvous after a power cut, a 4am wrong number informs him there's only seventy minutes before atomic bombs fall on L.A.

It's fortunate, then, that Denise Crosby's businesswoman Wanda happens to be partaking of an early breakfast, confirming to everyone's satisfaction that doomsday is indeed imminent. Thus begins Harry's search for Julie - not that difficult, as it happens - and a race against time to flee the city before a waking world discovers the truth and starts clogging the roads.

Obviously, things don't go to plan, and we follow Harry through a succession of mini-adventures with characters like Mykelti Williamson's low-rent fence and Brian Thompson's ex-pilot, with his 4am keep-fit regime and a haircut nearly as startling as Winningham's. And all the while the clock ticks down in real time, with the pressure building to the point at which L.A. bursts in a riot of looting and car-jacking.

Edwards doesn't quite

possess the gravitas necessary to authenticate the end of the world, but he holds *Miracle Mile* together amiably enough, such that we do actually care what happens; hints are also dropped throughout that this might be a major misunderstanding, the panic and unnecessary deaths traceable back to Harry misjudging a phone prank.

The soundtrack is as idiosyncratic as the rest of uber-1980s band Tangerine Dream's other work, and the new transfer and special edition, filled with a plethora of worthwhile extras, make this a serious treat for those who've become fans of this peculiar adventure over the years. Who knows, with a certain someone's finger on the nuclear trigger, *Miracle Mile* might even pick up a new audience now in 2017, desperately looking for clues as to how to survive a nuclear retaliation.

Extras: trailer / commentaries / interviews / *The Music of Tangerine Dream* / alternate ending / storyboard comparison / cast reunion

JR SOUTHALL

+++++ 7



RED CHRISTMAS

DVD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: CRAIG ANDERSON / STARRING: DEE WALLACE, SARAH BISHOP, GEOFF MORRELL / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Too often the modern genre pays lip service to its classic heroines by giving them bitesize parts just big enough to dodge the 'cameo' label. These parts usually result in some badass fan appeasement (think Carrie Fisher in *Sorority Row*, Michelle Pfeiffer in *Dark Shadows*, or even Barbara Crampton in *You're Next*) but are thin on good dialogue and decent stuff to do. *Red Christmas*, written and directed by Craig Anderson, benefits from a great supporting

cast and a solid approach to the family dynamic, but make no mistake, this is Dee Wallace's film. The script was written with a clear appreciation for her long career playing tough characters, but also a wariness of this being horror fan fodder made to exploit Wallace's following and automatic viewership. There is a clear desire to deliver a great rounded horror experience.

In some ways that could put people off. As a schlocky slasher, it's both heightened

and hampered by its sincerity. As a tension building thriller, it's shot in the foot by its humour, especially in the weightier scenes. The worst thing about the film is probably the costume worn by the intruder, which maroons him somewhere between the *Ghost of Christmas Future* and a leper. He really sticks out as the most amateur part of a film, that otherwise does pretty well at concealing its tiny budget. But overall it's a perfect example of black comedy: funny but in a stomach-kicking kinda way.

Gore hounds will be surprised at just how schlocky *Red Christmas* is willing to be. Anderson keeps the gory extent of his festive mean streak pretty much under wraps until a genuinely shocking first kill throws the film into shameless '80s territory. After that, things only get worse/better. The power is cut and suddenly the film's only lighting comes from festive lights. The murders are emotionally charged thanks to the great bond between cast members and a snappy script that introduces each with an affectionate tongue in its cheek. *You're Next* tried to do a similar thing but its family wasn't well enough established or likeable.

Underneath the warm, if cynical, family sentiment, *Red Christmas* is a dark and luridly coloured home invasion film. Anderson is a stylish purveyor of thrills and chills with a ruthless approach to his characters, which is great because it means Wallace's increasingly desperate but dangerous matriarch is up against a real threat; her family needs her. The film needs her. We need her. Thank God for Dee Wallace. Do yourself a favour: make this your Christmas horror movie for 2017 and keep an eye out for Anderson.

Extras: Bloopers / Q&A / Deleted Scenes

SCOTT CLARK

+++++ 7





TAG

DUAL / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: SION SONO / STARRING: REINA TRIENDL, MARIKO SHINODA, ERINA MANO / RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 20TH

Written and directed by prolific filmmaker Sion Sono, Tag hits you at the outset with a gory set piece as shy, poetry-writing schoolgirl Mitsuko narrowly avoids a malevolent gust of wind that slices her fellow students in half. It's quite the opener and sets the tone for the film that follows. As Mitsuko

makes her way back to school, everything seems fine and she begins to question her sanity. With her friend Aki and two other girls, Sur and Taeko, Mitsuko ditches school to head out into the woods to try and clear her head and figure out what's real and what isn't. From there on in, Tag becomes

increasingly surreal and it's soon apparent something even weirder than could be expected from that brutal opening is going on.

It's been commented on already that Tag is a mix of arthouse and exploitation and that's a fair assessment. Sono divides his film equally into beautifully shot emo whimsy and grinding, gory violence and CGI blood. There's an explanation for everything at the end that ties all of the mystery together in an outlandish but relatively satisfying way, which reinforces the feminist themes running throughout. Whether you enjoy this or not probably depends on your familiarity with Japanese cinema in general and the purposefully jarring, duelling tones of this film in particular. It's well acted, often remarkably aesthetically captivating, and whips by in less than 90 minutes. For those inclined, there's plenty of subtext to get stuck into. If not, well, there's more than enough onscreen action and blood to keep your attention.

There are plenty of sequences of graphic bloodletting one minute and

serene nature the next and for a recent film, as you might expect, it's all very sharp and clear. The transfer on Eureka's release is resplendent and serves this very visually orientated film well. What's sadly not resplendent is the extra material, because there basically isn't any. You just get a trailer that does a fine job of mis-selling almost everything interesting about the movie to make it appear a dumb grindhouse knock-off. No commentaries, no featurettes or anything at all, which is a shame as there's enough to unpick about the film to warrant it, so perhaps there's just nothing available.

If you really just don't care about supplementary material, or you must have the film on disc or have no other way to catch it, that's pretty much the only reason to pick up this release. Overall, this is a decent and most definitely interesting film but is an inessential release.

JAMES EVANS

★★★★★ 5



THE KILLER B' MOVIE COLLECTION

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTORS: VARIOUS / SCREENPLAY: VARIOUS / STARRING: STEVE MCQUEEN, ANETA CORSAUT, GERALD MOHR / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Certain strands of popular fiction have stereotypes attached to them that are so engrained they form part of their lasting identity on the popular culture spectrum - flash fiction, grindhouse, erotic dinosaur literature (seriously, that's a legitimate thing - STARBURST even covered the genre some months back). However, the granddaddy of this subversive attitude towards popular media of fiction with otherwise good intentions is surely the B-movie. It's rather incredible that an entire era of movies, able to traverse such different themes as science fiction, horror and fantasy with camp aplomb, can be condensed into a single letter, isn't it?

Fabulous Films' nine-disc The Killer B' Movie Collection is an

endlessly handsome reminder of how the B-movie, despite being skeletal in the quality of its execution, was abundant in enthusiasm for tackling the mad and the weird. Collecting nine movies from between 1939 to 1964, no expense is spared in capturing the best of the worst. Littered throughout these nine escapades are creatures from other worlds, often without any concept of right or wrong, intent only on destroying, murdering, consuming. Mad scientists, experiments gone wrong and monsters accidentally let loose serve as the chief plot devices throughout these madcap stories.

All sounds lovely on paper, but time has a way of romanticising that which might

be perhaps left alone. When watched individually, the scars of an industry keen to exploit the zeitgeist of adventures focusing on alien invasions anyway it can show rather well. 1961's Reptilicus, for example, is at its best when the titular creature doesn't actually appear. The discovery of a fleshy portion of unknown reptile, which eventually regenerates into a dinosaur-like monster that attacks all it sees, isn't the most inspired of premises. However, the opening half hour or so, focusing on the discovery of this cryptic creature and its unforeseen rebirth, is captivatingly tense. That enjoyable slow-burn is stamped out when you finally see the pathetic Reptilicus itself, a poorly made puppet that shoots unconvincing acid slime at any poor soul it wants.

Nevertheless, we can still enjoy these films for tackling the early mechanics of alien invasions that have so densely populated popular fiction with a charming, gleeful abandon. 1960's The Angry Red Planet has a loose, ethereal allure to its humans-visiting-unknown-world scenario. Even The Blob, which hasn't aged well in the slightest, has reckless fun with its fusion of soppy teen romance and alien-takeover plot devices.

What unites these films, other than their limp presentation, is a fascination with how creatures and technology from beyond this

world should be treated as an unknown, and therefore a danger. Granted, those fears are often well founded when these freakish monsters start attacking you for no good reason, but this era was cinematic science fiction's baby steps. It's easy to be less than forgiving about the quality of these films when so much has come after them, but would any of your favourite science fiction movies ever have happened had these films not come bursting through the gates, charging at full speed with Reptilicus-like fury towards unsuspecting audiences?

For anyone curious about science fiction's early days on the big screen, The Killer B' Movie Collection is an excellent starting point. It's highly recommended that you binge-watch these films rather than view them one at a time. That way, the enthusiasm each of these films boast for handling their respective themes and ideas has just enough muscle to mask the often poor direction, writing or acting. Then again, isn't that part of the fun with B-movies? As mentioned, time has a way of romanticising things, but history seems to have cemented the idea that the perceived 'awfulness' of a B-movie is part of its appeal. The Killer B' Movie Collection is a joyous testament to that idea.

FRED MCNAMARA

★★★★★ 10



THE UNRAVELING

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: THOMAS JAKOBSEN / SCREENPLAY: JUSTIN S. MONROE, THOMAS JAKOBSEN / STARRING: ZACK GOLD, JASON TOBIAS, BENNETT VISO, BOB TURTON, COOPER HARRIS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Every now and again, a low budget film manages to raise itself above the mundane and routine, holding its celluloid (well, digital, but you know what we mean) head above the crowd and daring to actually tell a story without resorting

to predictable shocks. While not entirely original, *The Unraveling* succeeds in delivering something memorable.

Michael (Gold) is an addict a year out of rehab and forever making promises to his pregnant fiancée Jess (Harris) that he'll

be clean; he's even been holding down a dreary job in a warehouse. Unfortunately, despite all his insistence, he's drifted back into using. Foolishly, though, he has also stolen a large amount of money from some dealers. Which we assume is why four hockey-masked thugs kidnap him at his place of work and bundle him into the boot of a car. Only it turns out that despite the roughness, it's nothing more than his closest friends who are a little put out that he bailed on a stag weekend they had planned for him, so they've taken things into their own hands - apparently with Jess' approval - and intend on giving him a bachelor party to remember in some remote woods.

Michael gets very perturbed when one of the gang has gone through his backpack and taken his 'stash' and it's clear the friendships are a little strained. When one of them is found dead in the middle of the night and the battery cables are missing from their car, they band together to survive the night for fear of 'what's out there'. Could Michael's drug

problems be catching up with him and taking out his friends too?

The Unraveling has an interesting set-up and, fortunately, we're happy to say it continues to deliver some surprising shocks and, more importantly, some genuine human drama. Without having to resort to excessive gore or cheap comic relief, what we have is a tense - if not actually scary - tale of survival; be it for the characters' life or mind.

Seasoned horror fans might be able to figure out where it's going before the third act, but Jakobson and the cast handle everything so well that it's still a thrill ride getting there. Sidestepping a lot of the genre trappings, it offers a fresh take on a tired subject. Intense and gruelling, *The Unraveling* is an above average low budget effort that deserves to be seen and enjoyed by a larger audience.

ANIMAL JOHNS

+++++ 8



THE THING (1982)

BD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: JOHN CARPENTER / SCREENPLAY: BILL LANCASTER / STARRING: KURT RUSSELL, KEITH DAVID, DAVID CLENNON, THOMAS G. WAITES, T.K. CARTER, WILFORD BRIMLEY / RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 20TH

What really is there left to say about John Carpenter's *The Thing*? A true genre classic from 1982, the film is an all-time favourite of many and often cited as a sci-fi horror masterclass. So, thirty-five years on from its initial release, Arrow Video have put together a rather splendid looking release of this iconic movie. The key question, of course, is whether this new release is worth shilling out for.

Surely there isn't anybody out there unfamiliar with *The Thing*, but here's a quick rundown of the central plot. Handed the tagline of "*The ultimate in alien terror*," a cast headed up by the likes of Kurt Russell and Keith David have to deal with an intense,

shape-shifting alien menace. Set in Antarctica, we see an isolated research team battling an organism that mirrors the form of anything it comes in contact with - meaning that the group don't know who to trust as the Ennio Morricone-scored tension rises amidst the possibility that any one of them could well be this alien 'thing'.

As mentioned, you likely already know all of this and you have likely gushed over *The Thing* just as much as we all have over the decades since its release. So, let's get to the meat of this release: is it a worthwhile purchase? To get to the point, it's an unequivocal yes from us. While much of

the crammed bonus material on display here has been seen before on previous releases of Carpenter's much-loved classic, long-time fans of the film will be squealing in excitement over some of the new material that's included. On that front, there's the fascinating one-hour-plus *Who Goes There?* In Search of *The Thing* documentary, which looks at *The Thing* from its infancy as a John W. Campbell-penned novel right through to Carpenter's '82 movie and beyond, complete with new soundbites and involvement from all of the key players. In addition to this, there's the also-new 1982: *One Amazing Summer* documentary that serves as a retrospective of sorts. And, of course, there's the audio commentary track from Messrs Carpenter and Russell, which can't help but put a grin on your face as two of genre's finest figures guide you through this cherished picture.

While the new material and chat track will instantly make this new release a must-have for John Carpenter fans, equally as mesmerising and worthy of spending your money for is the new restoration of the movie. Much like the 35th anniversary release of Carpenter's *Halloween* a few years ago, this swanky restoration has been overseen by longtime Carpenter collaborator and cinematographer Dean Cundey. And just as was the case with that *Halloween* release, this new release of *The Thing* looks

absolutely phenomenal. As crisp as a winter's day, *The Thing* has never looked better and it only further serves to emphasise just how wonderfully shot the film is, how pitch-perfect all of the performances are for what was needed - including, of course, Kurt Russell and his magnificent bastard of a beard on arguably career-best form - and just how jaw-droppingly twisted, effective and revolutionary the SFX work of Rob Bottin and his team was and continues to be.

With any new release of an old favourite - especially one like this where there have already been several releases over the years - there's always that worry of whether it's a case of milking a cow one too many times. Fear not, though, for this packed new release of *The Thing* is worth every penny, and it feels justified for the excellent special features and truly beautiful 4K restoration.

Extras: Audio commentary with John Carpenter and Kurt Russell / 'Who Goes There? In Search of The Thing' documentary / '1982: One Amazing Summer' documentary / 'John Carpenter's The Thing: Terror Takes Shape' documentary / Vintage featurettes / Outtakes / Behind the scenes / Trailers and TV spots / Still galleries / Poster / Lobby cards / Book containing new writing on the film

ANDREW POLLARD

+++++ 10



VAMPIR CUADRECUC (1971)

DVD + BD / CERT: E / DIRECTOR: PERE PORTABELLA / STARRING: CHRISTOPHER LEE, HERBERT LOM, SOLEDAD MIRANDA / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Back in 1969, Christopher Lee was disenchanted with what the Hammer Dracula series had become. Whilst they all have their merits, it's easy to understand how the Stoker aficionado grew dejected at the thought of another episode. So perhaps that's why he

was convinced to star in Jess Franco's intended-to-be-faithful adaptation of the classic novel. At the same time, Pere Portabella was just starting to come out of a ten-year wilderness following a disagreement with Spain's dictator General Franco. He managed to get

permission to film the making of Jess' Dracula and the footage shot is what forms Vampir Cuadecuc, an 'experimental' making-of documentary. Portabella uses the footage to tell his own version of the Dracula story, in an almost completely silent film that instead uses sound effects and Carlos Santos' challenging music to soundtrack events.

The black and white imagery is shot high contrast, so picture quality isn't the aim for this release. Rather, 'cuadecuc' is a Catalan term that refers to the unexposed footage at the end of a film roll and the effect here is using that film to create a commentary on the art itself. We get lots of footage shot from different angles to Franco's film mixed in with seemingly random sound effects and Santos' unique soundtrack, with the most effective moments being the candid, haunting shots of the tragic Soledad Miranda, star of some of Franco's most well-known movies.

As for the final result, this is a project you can take how you want. We can't imagine anyone who is unaware of the context of the time period for Spain, Franco's film or the filming of

it to be that captivated. For anyone that applies meaning to it, whether that be a commentary on General Franco's regime, or on the process of filmmaking itself, there'll be plenty of others who instead just think it's the equivalent of an indulgent, noodling jazz record. So, in summary, if you're a Franco fan or like interesting takes on how film is constructed, or how film can subtly comment on the world it exists in, then you're likely to get something out of this and for you, the extras are worthwhile too. There's an interview with the remarkably spry octogenarian Portabella, two (fairly) recent short films from him that reunited him with Santos, an appreciation by BFI curator William Fowler, and a booklet with writing on the film.

This is almost the very definition of a genuinely niche release and it's a fine job done by Second Run in that respect. If you've interested in the film, or have wanted a chance to catch it, this is certainly the release for you.

JAMES EVANS

★★★★★★★ 7



SHE WHO MUST BURN

VOD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: LARRY KENT / SCREENPLAY: LARRY KENT, SHANE TWERDUN / STARRING: SARAH SMYTH, SHANE TWERDUN, ANDREW MOXHAM, MISSY CROSS, ANDREW DUNBAR / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

After a doctor at a small-town abortion clinic is murdered, its councillor Angela continues to give advice, despite the opposition and threats from the local evangelical congregation, who believe that a spate of sick children is God's punishment for her still being alive, rather than the local mine poisoning the water supply, and begin hounding her in a modern day witch hunt.

Despite its subject matter, this is not a film discussing the morality of abortion, but

rather the slow erosion of the rights of women in an age and a country that both pride themselves for their purported modernity, and those people who would see society dragged back into the Dark Ages, while law enforcement panders to their anachronistic conviction in theocratic doctrine.

We might perceive the Westboro Baptists and others of their ilk as little more than a joke, given disproportionate levels of media attention, but when people genuinely believe

their actions serve the will of a higher power than the laws that maintain the nation in which they live (and by convenient coincidence that will always seem to coincide with their own beliefs), they have the potential to become truly dangerous. In doing so, they grant themselves the right to dictate who has the right to live, and so they can decree who should die.

Representing such backward fundamentalism is the loathsome pastor Jeremiah Baarker, played by co-writer Shane Twerdun as a manifestation of the banality of evil. Soft-spoken, a perpetual smug half-smile and never seeming to blink, he regurgitates misogynistic preachings of man's natural dominion over women with such conviction it takes you aback that someone can genuinely take such beliefs seriously, and you itch to put a fist through his face long before you witness his remorseless abuse of his wife.

Most of the congregation are anonymous sign-waving thugs with no presence beyond making up a force of numbers, which is precisely the point. Like a colony of insects mutely manoeuvring in a singular purpose until given new commands, these people have no personality or resolve

of their own, but merely obey Baarker's instructions with such slavish and unthinking piety that their actions are an extension of his own will to obstruct and negate all the good that Angela attempts to do, through intimidation and violence. All the while, a colossal storm heads towards the town, as if the Almighty himself is voicing his displeasure at the crimes of wanton hate being perpetrated in his name.

Viewing *She Who Must Burn* is something of an endurance test; not in that phrase's usual sense of being utterly tedious, but because sitting through it is a physically draining ordeal that takes a while to fully recover from. The close-up handheld camerawork gives events an uncomfortable intimacy, forcing you to acknowledge the repugnant actions committed by the faithful, while implying a tacit complicity on your part and demanding to know what you're going to do about them. The film's heavy and unflinching portrayal of all-too-real subject matter is an unforgiving and harrowing experience that never relents for a moment.

ANDREW MARSHALL

★★★★★★★ 8

AUDIOSTATIC

THE LATEST NEWS
FROM THE WORLD OF
AUDIO ADVENTURES
BY TONY JONES



The Martian Curse

The curse of the unexpected production delay has hit not one but two versions of H. G. Wells' **The War of the Worlds**. First up, it's the Sherwood Sound Studios production, originally aimed for download release in the middle of October, and now (we are informed) it will be November in all formats, including limited edition DVD (with Dolby Digital 5.1 sound) and collector's edition USB in uncompressed 96kHz/24-bit DTS. Titled **The Coming of the Martians**, it stars Colin Morgan, Ronald Pickup, and Dan Starkey among others.

Also delayed is the Big Finish version, originally scheduled for November, now due in February 2018. Among its stars are Richard Armitage, Lucy Briggs-Owen, and Hywel Morgan, and it's entitled **The Martian Invasion of Earth**.

We'll keep you posted of any more changes, otherwise look forward to our reviews.

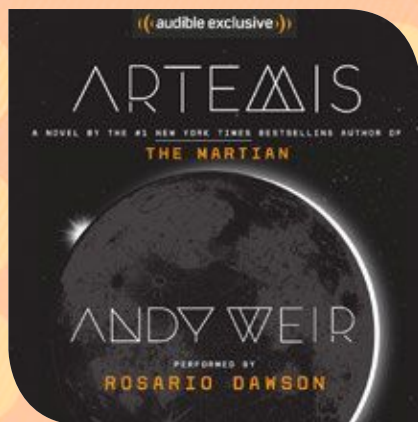
Audible Spotlight

We don't always focus on Audible releases, partly as there are so many book readings released every month, this column would quickly become just a list. There are, however, some new titles worth a mention.

First is a collection of Gothic horror stories under the title **The Monster Collection**. It brings together Richard Armitage reading **Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde**,

Dan Stevens reading **Frankenstein** and Greg Wise reading **Dracula**. Released at the end of October, it's a massive 30 hours and 24 minutes of pure classic brilliance.

Fans of **The Martian** might want to take a listen to **Artemis**. It's the latest novel by writer Andy Weir and is a heist story set in the near future, on the moon. Telling the story of criminal Jazz Bashara, it is read by



Rosario Dawson, runs for nearly nine hours and is released mid-November.

If you've been watching the new **Star Trek Discovery** on Netflix, you might like to know about **Desperate Hours**, an unabridged audiobook reading by Susan Eisenberg of the David Mack novel. It's set aboard the Shenzhou and centres on Michael Burnham. It's ten hours long and promises to flesh out Michael's backstory.

There's plenty of new **Doctor Who** around as well. Nick Briggs and Jon Culshaw narrate Terrance Dicks' novel of **The Five Doctors**, running for three and half hours and released early November. The new James Goss novel of a Douglas Adams idea, **Doctor Who and the Krikkitmen** will be with us early in the New Year. This Fourth Doctor and Romana story is narrated by Dan Starkey and runs for eight hours. The final **Doctor Who** title to mention is a chance to revisit the Tenth Doctor's era with a collection of nine stories written by, amongst others, Garry Russell, Mike Tucker, and Simon Guerrier. Narrating the stories are a superb set of **Who**-related actors, including Freema Agyeman, Georgia Moffett, Russell Tovey, and Bernard Cribbins.

Other DOCTOR WHO releases

Paul Magrs, not content with writing for his second Baker (Colin) in the **Baker's End** (or should that be Bakers'?) series for Bafflegab, has turned his hand back to the world of Tom Baker's Fourth Doctor. Fans of the **Hornet's Nest** series of BBC releases will want to know of the release of **The Thing from the Sea**, an original audio adventure read by Susan Jameson who plays Mrs Wibsey (and also stars in the **Baker's End** series). It's due in March 2018 and is a single disc. The story centres on a gigantic serpent, a Count Otto and a magician named Cagliostro. It's set in 18th century Italy and may be the first of many.

If you're a Big Finish fan, you might like to know the main range has titles 51 to 100 set to move to download only, and new pricing announced. Now's the time to think about plugging gaps in the collection.

On the BBC

A recent highlight on Radio 4 Extra was Susan Hills' **The Woman in Black**. Adapted into four thirty-minute episodes, it starred Robert Glenister as solicitor Arthur Kipps and was dramatised by Jon Strickland. Glenister has appeared in several plays for Radio 4 and 4 Extra and they are all recommended. Halloween brought us some H. P. Lovecraft in the form of **The Tomb** read by Ryan McCluskey and a chance to hear the 1997 Basil Copper short story **The Candle in the Skull**, read by Gerard McDermott.

We were also treated to a five-part Radio 4 Drama **Pilgrim** by Sebastian Baczkiewicz. A dark fantasy centring on the immortal William Palmer (Paul Hilton), the titular Pilgrim, who in 1185 was cursed to eternity by the Faerie King, this run of stories started with a call for help when a deadly forest spirit possesses an old friend.

Early November also found us listening to the two-part abridgement of the new Philip Pullman novel **The Book of Dust**. Read by Simon Russell Beale, it was abridged by Doreen Estall over two 75-minute episodes.

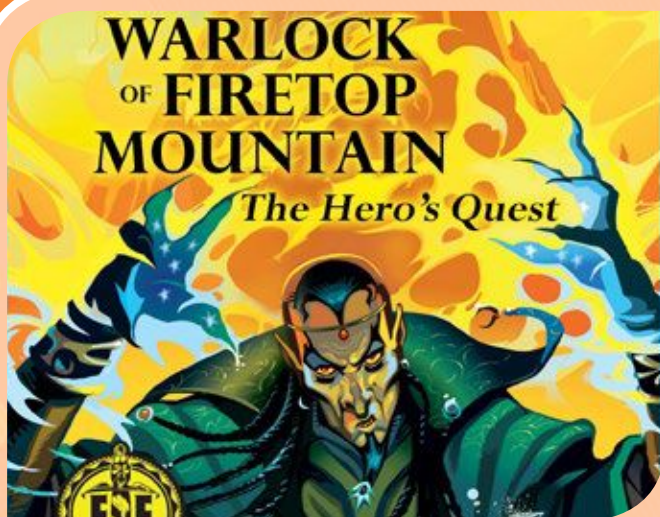
Podcast Ponderings

If you like podcasts with a horror theme, check out the Panoply Twitter feed (@Panoply). They launched their Haunted podcast for Halloween with the tagline 'Ghosts live in everyday places and haunt ordinary people.' Based in Brooklyn, they also have a new podcast coming mid-November called **Family Ghosts** about the ghosts that haunt our family histories. There's a lot more online.

There's also the Darker Projects site, which has been running since 2004 and producing a lot of quality drama, including **Batman**, **Star Trek**, **Doctor Who** and their own ranges. They are worth exploring not only for their projects, but also, they are happy to have people audition and even submit to them. Their website sets out their stall well - Audio Drama in a Darker Shade. Another highly recommended producer.

THE LATEST AUDIO
RELEASES REVIEWED
AND RATED

REVIEWS



WARLOCK OF FIRETOP MOUNTAIN – THE HERO'S QUEST

DIRECTORS: RICHARD FOX, DAVID N. SMITH / STARRING: TIM TRELOAR, TOBY LONGWORTH, RACHEL ATKINS / PUBLISHER: FOX YASON MUSIC PRODUCTIONS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The Fighting Fantasy series has had a very good year so far; with the book series back in print (and producing new books), a new interactive game and a highly successful regular convention, it

seems the franchise is back. It's no surprise it's hard to kill, as any Fighting Fantasy player knows that avoiding death is as easy as turning a page.

The latest offering into

this high-fantasy canon is an audio drama inspired by the first FF book, Warlock of Firetop Mountain. We open with the elf Vale Moonwing (voiced by Rachel Atkins) having a chance encounter on the road and being appropriately brave and defiant. Vale is an elf on a mission, to kill the evil wizard Zagor (Toby Longworth). Zagor is, of course, the titular warlock who lives on a mountain with lots of red weed at its summit. Along the way, she encounters Cassius Stormblade (Tim Treloar), a human adventurer who's not good with thinking but very handy with a blade, and the two team up; Cassius on a mission of mercy and greed and Vale on a heroic mission to murder the elderly.

As adaptations go, it's fairly on the nose. If you've played the original game book this drama is inspired by, then you'll recognise many of the early encounters and ideas from that story. The tale nails the feel of the Fighting Fantasy series perfectly; humans are greedy (but capable of excellence), elves are haughty (but wise) and the bad guys are not just bad, they

positively cackle with vengeful glee. The narrative makes much of the various choices the characters make and Zagor himself seems extremely delighted whenever a decision needs to be made. The story uses the clichéd device of the evil wizard being able to see the heroes coming, and though his conversation is rather limited, Zagor's scenes do frame the story nicely.

Toby Longworth is clearly having a lot of fun as the Warlock, taking a welcome break from the various heroes he usually gets to be in audio dramas. Overall, it's exactly what you'd want a drama based on the Fighting Fantasy series to be. This is clearly the first in a planned long-running series, and we'll be unsurprised if we hear the voices of some of these characters again. Warlock of Firetop Mountain - The Hero's Quest is a good start to what will hopefully become a lengthy fantasy audio franchise.

ED FORTUNE

★★★★★★★ 7



THE HAPPENSTANCE FOX

AUTHOR: PAUL MAGRS / STARRING: COLIN BAKER, KATY MANNING, SUSAN JAMESON, ALASTAIR PETRIE, MARGARET CABOURN-SMOTH / PUBLISHER: BAFFLEGAB / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

When last we ventured to the somewhat eccentric village of Happenstance in Tatty Bogle, all looked up for Tom Baker, the King of Cats, as he charged into an infernoing tower. Since then, he's been covered in bandages in the local hospital, tended by Sister Timperley. Who then can save Happenstance from mischief? Who can deal with the plague of giant rats? Enter novelist and monster hunter Derek Titts!

The plot has to deal with two main threads - the return of the King of Cats, and the monstrous plague ravaging the village. In the midst of this, Reverend Ailing is worried about something, Mrs Frimbly (Susan Jameson) is distracted and young Susie (Katy Manning) is busy up and down from that London, and every time she pops back to Happenstance, things are getting worse!

At the centre, if there is a centre to the story, is the return of the King of Cats, and as the series is all tied up under the banner

of Baker's End, perhaps it was inevitable that the new incarnation of the King would be Colin Baker. Perhaps the series should be titled Bakers' End?

Colin's reveal is handled well, though his arrival causes less confusion than might have been expected, though that might be the plague distracting everybody, never mind Derek Titts and his extreme pest control. It's a new era, but there's plenty of continuity, with darkness creeping across the village, and the whole is still baffling and adorable in equal measure. The only downside is the lack of news on the next episode!

Baker's End is as mad as ever, though it's a slightly different style of mad, and there's more bad language than usual, thanks to the mysterious Sister Timperley. The stakes seem raised, and future episodes have a lot to live up to.

TONY JONES

★★★★★★★ 8

OST

THE STARBURST
GUIDE TO THE LATEST
SOUNDTRACKS
BY NICK SPACEK



Among the many amazing things regarding *Thor: Ragnarok* is that, not only was it directed by the offbeat New Zealander Taika Waititi - the man behind the vampire mockumentary *What We Do in the Shadows* and the heartfelt *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* - but Mark Mothersbaugh (from Devo) was contracted to create the score. In the wake of his announcement, several news outlets mentioned the fact that it was Mothersbaugh's first superhero score, but *The LEGO Movie* was definitely close enough to recommend him for this film. While the score's physical release wasn't due out until after we went to press, Hollywood Records placed it on Spotify the week before *Ragnarok* hit theaters. It's distinctive in a way which we'd hoped from *Doctor Strange*. Whereas Michael Giacchino's score for *Doctor Strange* was fairly straightforward - aside from the excellently weird *The Master of the Mystic End Credits* - Mothersbaugh's score for *Ragnarok* mixes wordless, chanting choirs with *Tron*-like electronics on *Arena Fight*, uses a harpsichord and sitar simultaneously in *Weird Things Happen*, and drops a full-on dance party in *Grandmaster Jam Session*. It's the liveliest Marvel Cinematic Universe score yet.

Only of slightly less interest is the fact that Netflix released the second season of *Stranger Things* just before Halloween, and along with it, the second instalment of Kyle Dixon and Michael Stein's score. We enjoyed the Survive members' music from the first series, but felt that the two volumes of music was a bit much and somewhat overwhelming, so it was nice to see that Lakeshore Records has instead pared down Season Two's music to a slightly more

manageable 34-track compilation, which you can stream on Spotify. There is, of course, a version with 15 bonus tracks available on Apple Music, however.

If you're more a fan of *Stranger Things'* retro pop tunes, fear not. Legacy Recordings has you covered with their compilation, which was also released the same day as the second season. In addition to dialogue snippets from throughout the show, there are nostalgia cuts by The Clash (*Should I Stay or Should I Go*, obviously), along with the Bangles, the Police, Corey Hart, and Joy Division, along with some left-of-center tunes from the likes of Fad Gadget. The version of Scorpions' *Rock You Like A Hurricane* sounds like it's the 2011 *Comeblack* re-recording, instead of the original version from *Love at First Sting*, which kind of sucks, and the dialogue snippets are all rather short and kind of quiet, but the tunes make for a nice soundtrack to making dinner on a Saturday evening, so it might be worth picking up if you really need to show your fandom in any and all ways.

In further Lakeshore news, the label also digitally released the score to *Jigsaw*, the latest instalment in the *Saw* franchise. As were the previous seven (!) films in the franchise, this one was scored by Charlie Clouser, who once again figures out a way to reintroduce the series' most notable piece, *Hello Zepp*. There are a series of intriguing instrumental choices this go-around, such as the Que Lastas, "a large sheet of stainless steel with piano strings and metal rods attached [...] played with a cello bow," along with "a Chinese guzheng, played with a bow to create shuddering patterns that create a sense of nervous tension, as well as a pedal steel guitar [played] with an e-bow to create more ominous drone-like tones," says Clouser in a press release.

In both this month and the next, Silva Screen is bringing you quite a few options for Christmas presents. At the beginning of this month, they dropped a double compact



disc retrospective of Thomas Newman's work, as performed by The City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra. It includes his work for Disney on the likes of **Finding Nemo** and its sequel, **Finding Dory**, and **WALL-E**, multiple cuts from **The Shawshank Redemption**, along with pleasant surprises such as the still-impressive title music for HBO's **Six Feet Under**. About the time this issue hits your hands, the label has another career retrospective, this time a single disc collection of Terence Blanchard's work, as performed by the Brussels Philharmonic and conducted by Dirk Brossé, in advance of Blanchard's appearance as the guest of honour at this year's Film Fest Gent's World Soundtrack Awards. The composer's work for the films of director Spike Lee gets highlighted quite well, covering big hits like **Malcolm X** as well as the comedy of **She Hate Me** and the media commentary of **Bamboozled**.

New music from Silva Screen is in the form of the second volume of Ben Foster's music for the relaunched **Thunderbirds Are Go**, which is once again robustly adventurous. It's due out the last week of November, and on the first of December, the label brings two albums. First up is the Joanna Bruzdowicz score for 'the disturbing sci-fi drama **The White King**', which is, at turns, minimalist, baroque, and disconcerting, but always brilliant. Second up is the physical release of **Blue Planet II**, the sequel to the 2001 BBC natural history series. The score is by Hans Zimmer, along with Jacob Shea and David Fleming of Zimmer's Bleeding Fingers Music. The digital release came out to coincide with the series' début at the end of last month. It's very Zimmer-like, meaning that one's either going to declare it brilliant or utterly obvious. For us, it falls somewhere between - the composer's work is perfectly fine within the realm of film, but falls flat on its own terms.

Speaking of Hans Zimmer, the folks at Arrow Video have announced their second vinyl LP release, and it's a pretty great one: the score for the 1986 horror action film **The Zero Boys**. The limited-edition pressing of 500 copies comes on translucent blue 180-gram vinyl, and marks the début release of the score to Nico Mastorakis' 'thrilling hybrid'. The score features electronic work by Zimmer alongside orchestral cues from Stanley Myers, and James Plotkin has newly mastered the music from the original 1/4" analog tapes. It comes in a heavyweight gatefold sleeve with new Graham Humphreys' art that complements his work on last year's Blu-ray, as well as liner notes by director Mastorakis. The LP will be available at the end of November.



Last autumn, Demon Music Group repressed the BBC's thirteenth instalment of their Sound Effects series, entitled **Death and Horror**. Composed by Mike Harding, the 1977 record featured such sounds as *Red Hot Poker into Eye*, *The Hell-Hound (Panting)*, and *Ghostly Footsteps (With Chains)*. Pressed on blood-splattered clear vinyl, it was quite a success, so it goes without saying that the label would eventually delve once again into the sounds of horror. For their upcoming release, Demon Music Group will be heading onto the continent to present a double LP (with compact disc included) compilation **Vault of Horror: The Italian Connection**. Covering the 'Golden Age of Italian horror,' as the label dubs it, the music ranges from the early '60s to the mid-'80s, with tracks from Nico Fidenco, Stelvio Cipriani, and Fabio Frizzi, as well as - of course - Ennio Morricone. If you're a soundtrack collector, you likely already have acquired the full album represses of **Eaten Alive**, **The Beyond**, and even **Porno**

Holocaust, but the cover art by Graham Humphreys and cuts from **Rome 2033: The Fighter Centurions** and **The Last Hunter** make this appealing even to deep-digging fans of the genre. It's due out the first week of December.

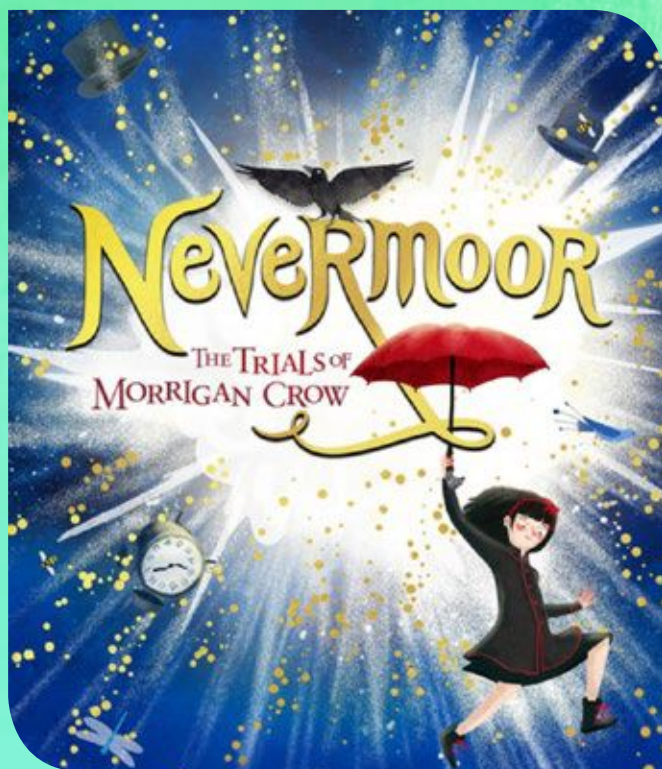
In further scary news, Waxwork Records announced their impending vinyl release of the Richard Bellis score for the 1990 mini-series, **Stephen King's IT**. The complete score was released as a double compact disc in 2011 as part of Intrada's limited-edition Special Collection series. There was also a single-disc version put out in 2016 as a 'Manufactured on Demand' edition made available through Amazon via WaterTower Music, but the complete score's been out of print for years, and now goes for \$60-100 on the secondhand market. No details as yet, but it's coming.

Waxwork also announced a couple of other releases in October, both of which were available a week later. First up, at the beginning of the month, was a double LP set of Harry Manfredini's music for **House** and **House II**, pressed on 180-gram vinyl in colours such as 'Crystal Skull' and 'Big Ben', along with artwork by Ghoulish Gary Pullin, and mastered from the original master tapes. The second release was announced with an October 13th release date, which meant more Manfredini music. The fourth instalment of Waxwork's **Friday the 13th** vinyl reissues is, of course, **The Final Chapter**, and is again pressed on 180-gram vinyl, re-mastered from the original master tapes, on such variants as 'Tommy Jarvis' (mask white with green splatter and blue swirl) or 'Camp Crystal Lake' (the first disc with blue smoke and the second with green smoke), deluxe old-style gatefold jackets with satin coating and spot gloss, an art print, and exclusive liner notes from director Joseph Zito.



BRAVE NEW WORDS

ED FORTUNE BRINGS
YOU THE LATEST
NEWS FROM THE
WORLD OF GENRE
LITERATURE



Townsend's NEVERMOOR to be adapted by 20th Century Fox

Jessica Townsend's *Nevermoor: The Trials of Morrigan Crow* will be turned into a movie by the same team responsible for *The Martian*. *Nevermoor* is (as the title suggests) the story of Morrigan Crow, a girl born on an unlucky day who is blamed for all local misfortunes and cursed to die young. Little does she know that her curse is a key to unlocking magical powers, including access to the strange world of *Nevermoor*. The children's book has been hyped as the next *Harry Potter* by some in the media. Drew Goddard will create the screenplay. Goddard is better known for his work on the aforementioned *The Martian*, and credits include *The Cabin in the Woods* and Netflix's *Daredevil* TV series.

Campaign to Canonise Tolkien begins

Catholic fans of J. R. R. Tolkien have begun a campaign to have the Professor recognised as a saint. The website causefortolkien.org lays out the plan to have Tolkien recognised in this fashion. It is being organised by a chap called Daniele Pietro Ercoli, who said on the website "This is all very early in the long journey towards sainthood, and we're still learning the canon law process, but from what we can tell the first step in petitioning for the opening of a Cause for Beatification and Canonisation is to form a group, called an Actor Causae, which will submit a formal request for an investigation to the bishop of the diocese where John R. R. Tolkien died". More on this unexpected journey as it happens.

Kazuo Ishiguro Wins Nobel Prize

British writer Kazuo Ishiguro has won the Nobel Prize for Literature. We suspect it'll look lovely next to his Clarke Award.

Julian May, 1931 - 2017

Julian May, 86, passed away October 17th. The Chicago-born author is best known for the *Saga of the Exiles* series, which included *The*

Many-Colored Land, *The Golden Torc*, *The Nonborn King*, and *The Adversary*. She wrote over 300 books in a variety of genres, many of them movie tie-ins and nonfiction. She used multiple pseudonyms, including Bob Cunningham, Lee N. Falconer, John Feilen, Matthew G. Grant, Jean Wright Thorne, Ian Thorne, and George Zanderbergen. She sold her first ever fiction story to the legendary John W. Campbell for his magazine *Astounding Science Fiction* back in 1950. May is survived by her three children.

2017 Sunburst Awards Winners Announced

The winners for the 2017 Sunburst Awards for Excellence in Canadian Literature of the Fantastic have been announced. Winners receive a medallion that incorporates the Sunburst logo and a cash prize.

Adult Fiction: **Spells of Blood and Kin**, Claire Humphrey
Young Adult Fiction: **Sophie Quire and the Last Storyguard**, Jonathan Auxier

Short Story: **The Sailing of the Henry Charles Morgan in Six Pieces of Scrimshaw (1841)**, A. C. Wise

Science Fiction Author Margaret Atwood receives Kafka Prize

The Franz Kafka prize is given for 'exceptional literary creation of contemporary authors whose work addresses the readers regardless of their origin, nationality and culture'. Atwood was selected as the 17th laureate of the prize by an international jury earlier this year. The award includes a statue of Kafka and a cash prize.

ElizaBeth Gilligan, 1962 - 2017

American writer ElizaBeth Gilligan, 55, died on October 9th, 2017 of cancer. She was best known for her short story *Iron Joan* and her work with the Science Fiction Writers of America. She is survived by her husband Douglas Archer Gilligan, two children, and two grandchildren.

Colson Whitehead Wins Another Award

Author Colson Whitehead has won the 2017 Zora Neale Hurston/Richard Wright Foundation Legacy Award in Fiction. The Legacy Awards honour 'the best in Black literature in the United States and around the globe'. Whitehead has won numerous awards for his book *The Underground Railroad*, a reality-hopping work of speculative fiction that explores America's relationship with slavery and racism.

TV Rights to DEVIL'S DAY Goes to Producers of THE NIGHT MANAGER

The TV rights for the critically acclaimed horror novel *Devil's Day* have been picked up by The Ink Factory, the company behind BBC smash hit *The Night Manager*. The book is about a Lancashire farm, and a community that believes that their leader, called the Gaffer, can keep the devil away through a combination of cunning and folk magic. But the Gaffer is dead, and his grandson may not be up to the task ahead. The author is the Costa Award-winning Andrew Michael Hurley.

And Finally...

STARBURST would like to wish everyone who participated in NaNoWriMo this year the very best of luck. We'd also like to remind those new to novel writing that the secret to good writing is rewriting, and to spend (at least) the rest of the winter rewriting your work. We also recommend the *Writers' & Artists' Yearbook* as an invaluable source of information as to what to do next.

Catch STARBURST's very own book podcast, which also happens to be called *Brave New Words*, every week via the STARBURST website, or tweet us @radiobookworm. You can even email ed.fortune@starburstmagazine.com for book-related queries and rants.

ED FORTUNE
HIGHLIGHTS
NOTEWORTHY
NEW TITLES

COMING SOON

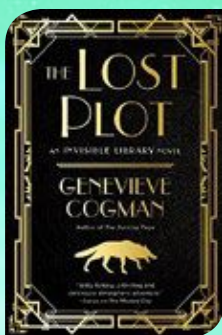


KILL ALL ANGELS

AUTHOR: ROBERT BROCKWAY
PUBLISHER: TITAN BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: DECEMBER 26TH

Cracked writer Robert Brockway returns with his latest of *The Unnoticeables* series, a time-hopping, reality-bending tale of supernatural shenanigans filled with faceless horrors, demons and angels. Back in the '80s, the protagonists are up against a conspiracy of Empty Ones. Meanwhile, in the modern day, a series of visions may well lead to the end of the tyranny of angels. If only the heroes can find the right sort of angel to help them enact the plan.

Expect on-the-edge writing, brilliant ideas and '80s-tastic references from one of the leading architects of the pop culture revolution.



THE LOST PLOT

AUTHOR: GENEVIEVE COGMAN
PUBLISHER: PAN
RELEASE DATE: DECEMBER 14TH

Librarian Irene and her assistant Kai return. The dimension-hopping book thieves have another mission: to retrieve a book for the mysterious Invisible Library, a place that can only be accessed through books and a strange sort of magic. Kai and Irene find themselves in prohibition-era New York fighting for their very existence against dragons, mobsters, and fae. Expect fedoras, flapper dresses, Tommy Guns, and intrigue.

Yet again, Irene and Kai must avoid triggering a war between the forces of Order and Chaos, whilst trying to grab the best books for themselves and avoiding the Library's own Internal Affairs department.

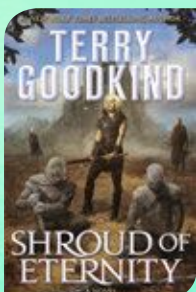


STEVEN UNIVERSE ORIGINAL GRAPHIC NOVEL: ANTI-GRAVITY

CREATOR: REBECCA SUGAR
PUBLISHER: KABOOM
RELEASE DATE: DECEMBER 27TH

When electromagnetic disturbances cause everything around Beach City to hover off the ground, it's up to Steven Universe and family to find out what's making Beach City even more weird than usual. The investigation will take the team to the Gem Temple first, and then beyond into space

(or maybe just the moon). Expect the usual charming storytelling that's made Steven Universe such a hit.



SHROUD OF ETERNITY: SISTER OF DARKNESS: THE NICCI CHRONICLES, VOLUME II

AUTHOR: TERRY GOODKIND
PUBLISHER: TOR BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 9TH, 2018

Goodkind's previous book, *Death's Mistress*, was an interesting brew of bloodshed, sex, deception, and sorcery. The sequel, *Sister of Darkness*, promises more of the same. It follows the further adventures of the formidable sorceress Nicci, she must quest to restore the power of her

companions in order to save the world. Expect the usual sort of fantasy fun from a master of the art.



ADLER VOLUME ONE: WOMAN OF MYSTERY

AUTHOR: LAVIE TIDHAR, PAUL MCCAFFREY (ILLUSTRATOR)
PUBLISHER: TITAN COMICS
RELEASE DATE: DECEMBER 31ST

It was inevitable, really, that amid all of this *Sherlock* spin-off craziness, someone would realise that there are plenty of stories to be told from the perspective of Irene Adler, one of the few people capable of outwitting Sherlock himself. Author Lavie Tidhar is no stranger to remixing Victorian heroes and putting them in utterly strange situations,

as fans of *The Bookman Histories* can easily attest. Backed up with the sublime talent of Paul McCaffrey, this book promises to be a treat for fans of *Sherlock* and steampunk alike.

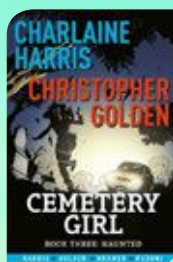


DARK STATE

AUTHOR: CHARLIE STROSS
PUBLISHER: TOR
RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 11TH, 2018

Charlie Stross' frankly bizarre tale of a trans-dimensional, time-bending cold war continues in the latest *Empire Games* book *Dark State*. When two alternate versions of America, both with access to incredibly destructive powers, finally realise that each other exist, all of reality trembles. Especially when a third, equally advanced and terrifying reality is discovered.

Expect Stross' trademark twisted sense of logic and high-octane thriller action, mixed in with personal drama and some fantastically sympathetic characters.



CHARLAINE HARRIS CEMETERY GIRL BOOK THREE: HAUNTED

AUTHOR: CHARLAINE HARRIS, GERALDO BORGES (ARTIST)
PUBLISHER: JO FLETCHER BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: MARCH 22ND, 2018

A graphic novel version of Charlaune Harris' signature spooky story, *Haunted* tells the tale of Calixa Rose Dunhill, aka the Ghost of Dunhill Cemetery. Calixa only remembers that someone left her for dead in the graveyard. She has been

hiding out, afraid to seek out her true identity in fear that her would-be murderer would find her and finish the job. This all changes when a mysterious stranger comes, bearing secrets.



IRON GOLD

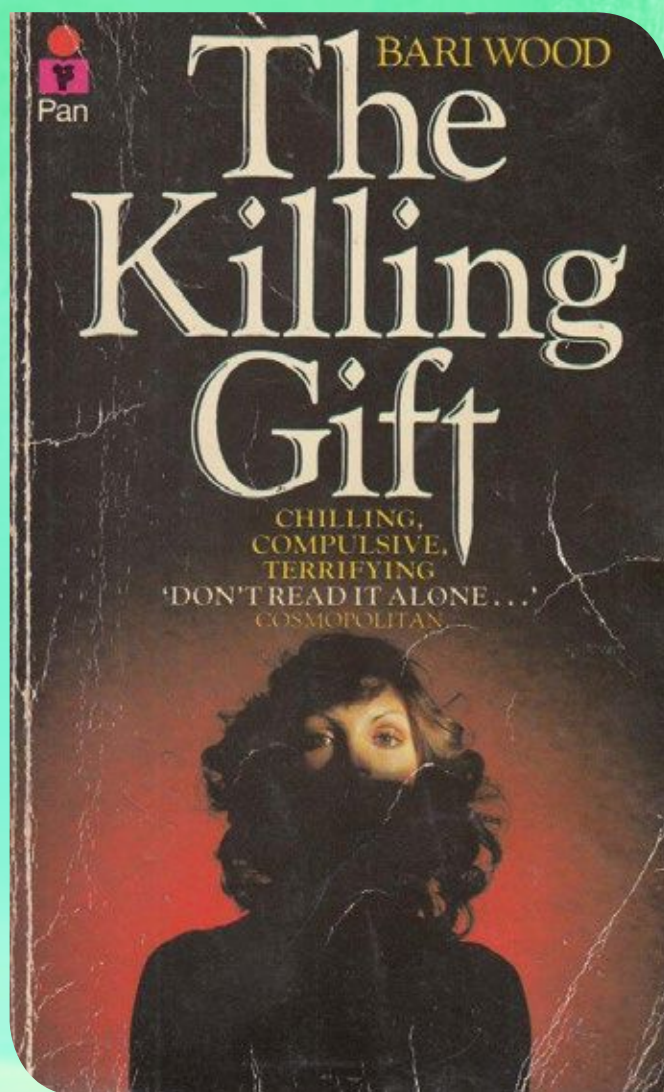
AUTHOR: PIERCE BROWN
PUBLISHER: HODDER & STOUGHTON
RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 16TH, 2018

The frankly lovely Pierce Brown is back with another sizzling space epic to excite, entice and tease. *Iron Gold* tells the tale of Darrow; born a slave, fate decided that he would become a weapon. Breaking the chains of an empire, Darrow is the new republic's poster child for a new destiny. But the cost of freedom has yet to be paid in full. At

the edge of space lurks a new threat, plotting to destroy the newfound democracy. In a world filled with Obsidian space pirates and terrifying crime lords, how can you resist this sequel to the *Red Rising* series?

BOOK WORMHOLE

A MONTHLY PICK
OF GENRE FICTION
BY KATE FATHERS



If you ever wanted to read *The Ring* from Sadako's perspective, then look no further than Bari Wood's *The Killing Gift*.

When Amos Roberts is killed while breaking and entering, Chief Stavitsky is glad. Roberts had been a thorn in his side, and was likely to wind up dead sooner rather than later. But when the post-mortem reports that Roberts' neck was broken without a single mark on his body, Stavitsky starts to get suspicious, especially when everyone he talks to seems terrified of the homeowner, Dr. Jennifer List Gilbert. Stavitsky's investigation soon turns to obsession as he discovers that Roberts isn't the only death in Jennifer's past,

and that she might be not only a murderer, but a woman with supernatural powers.

The Killing Gift is a many-layered horror novel. On the surface, it's a mystery horror in the style of *The Ring*, the story of a detective hunting the woman behind a supernatural murder. Wood's use of perspective, however, keeps the story from being so straightforward. *The Killing Gift* doesn't limit itself to Stavitsky's standpoint, instead jumping from character to character and time to time, giving readers a full view of the

story. We see Jennifer's parents, the events that led up to the creation of Jennifer's power and her early childhood. We see Jennifer's few friends and admirers, their cruelty and envy over her family money and their discomfort in her presence. Most importantly, we see Jennifer, everything she thinks and feels about her relationships, and what happened during every death. We come to know her loneliness and her kindness. We know her confusion. We know how desperate she is to find out why people are uncomfortable around her, and how disappointed she is when her mother refuses to tell her. Jennifer's perspective is vital, because without it we might believe the bias of the other characters. Although there is evidence that Jennifer's power, has been used benignly, and no one has asked her about her motives, every character is quick to condemn her. They call her a murderer and a monster, and in the tradition of many horror monsters, it's for something she had no control over. Only we readers know that Jennifer can't be reduced to a single epithet, and in keeping with that same horror monster tradition, Wood shifts our view of who the monster of *The Killing Gift* is. Is it Jennifer, who wept during med school when a Rhesus monkey died and only wants to be close to people? Or is it the people around her, like Stavitsky, whose obsession makes him threaten people and cause physical harm and swear that he will never, ever stop harassing his victim?

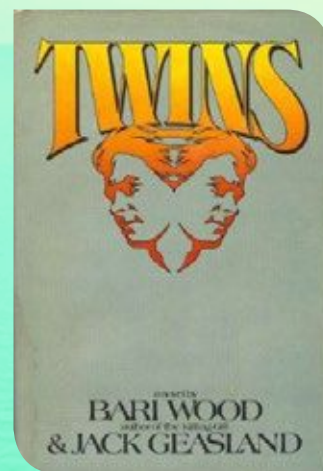
Monstrosity, Wood says, is only a matter of perspective.

By adding Jennifer's perspective, Wood also makes this a feminist novel. *The Killing Gift* is unequivocally a supernatural horror novel, but it is also a *feminine* horror novel, where the very real fears of women are on display. There are women who are stalked in *The Killing Gift*. Women are physically terrorised. Women's thoughts and feelings are dismissed. They're told by others what they think. Their wishes are ignored. Their sense of safety is immaterial. Jennifer's supernatural gift may have frightening consequences, but

this is the true terror of the novel. This is visceral, sending your heart pounding right up until the final line. This is what keeps women up at night. And this is what further removes Jennifer from the monstrous image Stavitsky and others are so keen on. Jennifer isn't a sociopath - she isn't Freddy Krueger or Pamela Voorhees. She's a real woman facing real harassment, living in a world where that harassment could so easily turn to her death. She just has the power to fight back.

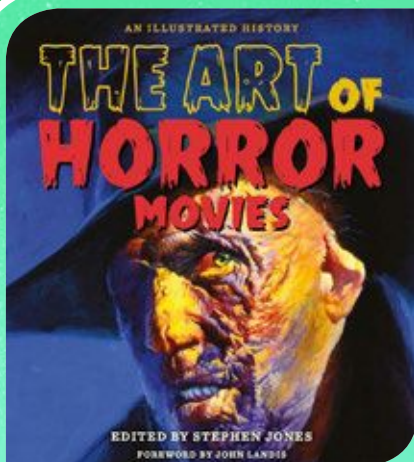
The Killing Gift is a fantastic novel, and a must for any horror fan. Its only weakness is the ending, which could have given Jennifer more agency, although perhaps that's where the real horror lies; agency, after all, would have been a happy ending. But the prose is still tense and the action terrifying, and the characters so compelling that Wood leaves you desperate to know more about them. In particular, each foray into Jennifer's past will leave you heartsick and captivated and hoping that someone will tell her the truth. *The Killing Gift* is a book that both horrifies and inspires - a book about monsters and a book about women, and a book that asks whether they could be one and the same. It always keeps you guessing. Until the end, you're never certain who to trust.

Bari Wood followed *The Killing Gift* with six other novels, including *Twins*, which was adapted into the 1988 film *Dead Ringers*.



THE LATEST RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED

REVIEWS



THE ART OF HORROR MOVIES: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY

EDITOR: STEPHEN JONES / PUBLISHER:
APPLAUSE THEATRE BOOK PUBLISHERS /
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

This hefty hardback follows on from 2015's *The Art of Horror*, which covered classical art pieces by respected and revered painters alongside the more pop culture depictions of horror seen in the likes of films posters and comic books. This new collection - as the title would suggest - focuses purely on the cinematic, in particular movie posters and

other advertising materials (lobby cards and the like).

As director John Landis says in his introduction, the images on film posters must not just inform, but also entice. And that's just what the majority of the reproductions do here. Seeing the plethora of both rare and familiar posters presented throughout the book definitely makes the reader desperate to track them down, even for films that one has seen numerous times. Divided into nine chapters that cover the various periods of celluloid terror, *The Art of Horror Movies* not only provides the promised visual history, but also a brief but highly informative written account of the decades' standout films. Each chapter is written by a preeminent voice in the genre, so we have Sir Christopher Frayling covering the silent era, for example, and the ever-debonair Kim Newman offering his unique take on the most visually arresting decade, the sixties. Surprisingly, it's living legend Ramsey Campbell who has drawn the short straw to dissect the new millennium's output, but he does it with style and aplomb, reeling off a shopping list of movies to track down, and in the process highlighting some that are usually criminally overlooked in other studies of the genre.

The recent posters lack the visual flair of the earlier examples, with the exception being the likes of Akiko Stehrenberger's strikingly beautiful take of Xan Cassavetes' *Kiss of the Damned* and the Art Deco approach of Gilles Vranckx for *The Strange Colour of Your*

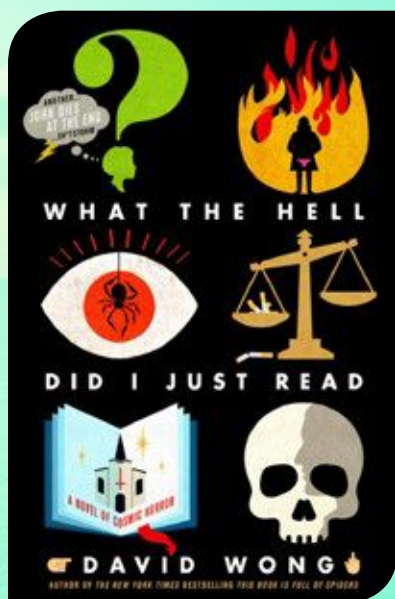
Body's Tears. Almost every other poster of the past decade or so has been derivative or formulaic (having said that, it is pointed out that the former was influenced by the Ted Coconis poster for Massimo Dallamano's 1970 adaptation of *Dorian Gray*). Compare the beautifully painted images that accompanied the releases of films in the forties and fifties to the cut-and-paste Photoshop examples of today and it's easy to choose what you'd sooner see.

As well as the vintage reproductions, there are many 'tribute' images by more current artists, in various different styles and using equally diverse media. They are of varied quality, too, but each has its own merit and audience. It's interesting comparing these interpretations to the original exhibition posters, which were often created before the films were ever projected, and sometimes before they were even made. Hindsight, or familiarity, brings a new viewpoint and quite often spotlights a completely different perspective on the original movie.

If you're a horror fan (and if not, why not?), a lover of cinema in general, or just like looking at stunning images, this book is for you. A potted history of the genre and some of the most beautiful film posters ever created - what's not to love?

MARTIN UNSWORTH

★★★★★★★★★★ 9



WHAT THE HELL DID I JUST READ?

AUTHOR: DAVID WONG / PUBLISHER: TITAN /
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

What The Hell Did I Just Read? is the third in the *John Dies At The End* series, written by the protagonist, David Wong - who is actually Cracked.com writer Jason Pargin.

Don't panic if you haven't read the previous two books, as you could dive right in here, although you would be missing out on a whole load of batshit insanity.

John, a drug addict, and David, an unemployed dumbass, have been drafted in to help out on what appears to be a simple child abduction but, this being set in a universe where a drug called Soy Sauce can either kill you or give you the ability to see the supernatural, it was never going to be that straightforward.

So instead, David, John and David's girlfriend, the one-handed Amy, find themselves the main suspects in said abductions after they find the first kid - only to have the child accuse David of being her abductor. Another child goes missing and is found in a closet in David's house; they are arrested and taken to a secret site where a shady team of apparent government agents are very interested in what's actually going on.

They receive assistance from supernatural expert Dr. Marconi and Korean porn star Joy Park as they stumble from one plot point to

another, somehow managing to stay alive as they do.

It would be unfair to spoil the surprises that crop up, but it's fair to advise that the kids are not what they originally appear to be and, if you've read the two previous novels in this series, that will come as no real surprise at all.

Add to this a flying monster that may or may not be helping our heroes and is christened the BATMANTIS??? (yes, that is literally how it is referred to) and you've got a recipe for probably the most insane book you'll read this year.

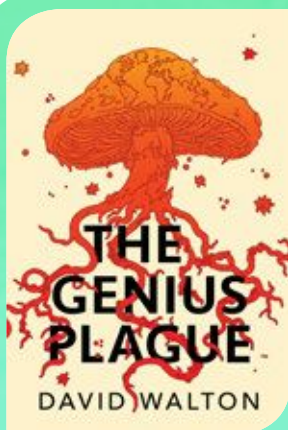
It's not going to win any Pulitzer prizes, but if you like your fiction with a large twist of craziness injected, then you're going to have a lot of enjoyment as you'll want to keep reading to see how the main characters will survive as they battle the bad guys with dildo cannons and ancient obsidian spears.

A book's title has never been more prophetic as to how you'll feel when you finish it.

Great fun.

JD GILLAM

★★★★★★★★★★ 7



THE GENIUS PLAGUE

AUTHOR: DAVID WALTON /
PUBLISHER: PYR / **RELEASE DATE:**
OUT NOW

Imagine a plague that kills some of its victims but leaves others more intelligent than ever before; a plague that may be a gift from the gods, but which might also be turning humanity into a massive hive-mind, working us towards a sinister goal and robbing us of our free will.

That's the dilemma facing NSA code-breaker Neil Johns, whose brother Paul has just returned from a dangerous trip into the Amazon basin where a fungal infection (not to mention a ruthless gang of river pirates) almost killed him. Paul is a mycologist but the mushrooms he picked during his journey through the jungle interior are far from magic. In fact, it is their spores that are spreading the genius plague

and – Neil believes – are also at the centre of a dangerous international conspiracy. Can the plague be used as a force for good, or is it an utterly alien intelligence forcing us towards our own destruction? Paul, whose behaviour has become increasingly erratic, wants his brother to embrace this next stage of human evolution. Neil, however, believes this is a menace that must be stopped at any cost – but how do you halt the spread of an airborne intelligence that has already worked its way around every corner of the earth?

David Walton has already published six highly acclaimed novels and was the recipient of the Philip K. Dick Award for his debut offering, *Terminal Mind*,

but the *Genius Plague* may be the best book he has written so far. It isn't just intensely readable and deeply disturbing, it has (as is par for the course for Walton) the ring of well-researched authenticity that is guaranteed to keep the more nervous or hypochondriacal reader lying awake at night, wondering if this is how the human race will really end. The *Genius Plague* is the ultimate 'hot zone' thriller, a kind of literary mash-up of *Outbreak* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Very believable, very scary, and you will never look at a mushroom in quite the same way again.

IAN WHITE

★★★★★★★★★★ 10



THE NINE: THIEVES OF FATE BOOK ONE

AUTHOR: TRACY TOWNSEND /
PUBLISHER: PYR / **RELEASE DATE:**
OUT NOW

the universe) rests upon the shoulders of nine unsuspecting subjects, whose activities are constantly being observed and recorded in a powerful book that seems to write itself. But the book has been stolen and humanity could be destroyed if it falls into the wrong hands.

Thirteen-year-old Rowena Downshire is a black market courier, struggling for survival on the streets of a grim steampunk city. Up until today, her one concern has been earning enough money to rescue her mother from a prison cell, but now her shady employer has given Rowena a package to deliver that will change the course of her life forever. It will also bring Rowena into the orbit of two extremely dangerous men – the enigmatic Alchemist, a heretic and sorcerer who reputedly trades in very dark magic (or is it just science by another name?) and the roguish ex-mercenary Anselm Meteron, who reluctantly takes the young

girl under his wing (but can he really be trusted?) – as well as the Reverend Phillip Chalmers who, although tasked with translating the stolen book, isn't prepared for the terrifying dangers he and his three new motley companions are about to face. And what will happen to them when the book reveals a secret no human was ever meant to know?

The *Nine* is an intriguing concept that starts off slowly but lays its foundations very well. This is a world that sits somewhere between flintlock fantasy and cyber-Charles Dickens, populated by a host of fantastic characters and ingenious monsters (the 'wrong looking' aigamuxa, with their twisted bodies and eyes glaring out from their heels, are memorably nasty antagonists) and, although the story touches artfully upon the nature of faith and the eternal conflict between religion and science, this isn't a book that's mired by 'what's the

nature of God' navel-gazing – it's the characters who are important here, and spiritual matters are the last things on their minds: Rowena, Meteron, Chalmers and the Alchemist are far too busy trying to protect the book and save the world.

As the beginning of a new fantasy series, *Book One of The Nine* bodes very well indeed. In fact, the only minor criticism would be that, in building this fascinating world and introducing us to its geography, its species and its politics, author Tracy Townsend has maybe been a little too ambitious. There's a lot of information to take onboard, some of the technology is unclear, and there are possibly too many incidental characters, but the story is never less than engrossing and the narrative cracks along at a whip-smart pace.

IAN WHITE

★★★★★★★★★★ 9

God is a scientist, creation is a Grand Experiment, and the fate of the world (possibly even



ALIEN: COVENANT ORIGINS

AUTHOR: ALAN DEAN FOSTER /
PUBLISHER: TITAN / **RELEASE DATE:**
OUT NOW

Alien: Covenant Origins is a confusing reading experience. Set in the period between the *Prometheus* and *Alien: Covenant* films, it focuses on a cult's attempt at preventing the latter ship from departing Earth's orbit. But it poses more questions than it answers, gives little insight into characters you want to know more about and given that there were never going to be any Aliens, you have to wonder why the novel exists at all.

Alan Dean Foster has a history of creating impressive movie novelisations within the *Alien* universe, but this original work feels somewhat underdeveloped. Reading it, you get the sense elements have

been removed, whether by the author himself or under advice from the studio, and while it is Daniels and Tennessee, the film's central characters you're interested in, it is lesser figures Lope and Rosenthal who take centre stage here. As the plot of the novel revolves around terrorist attempts at stopping the ship departing, putting security officers to the fore makes sense, but any interest for the reader is dampened from the outset as you already know any plot fails.

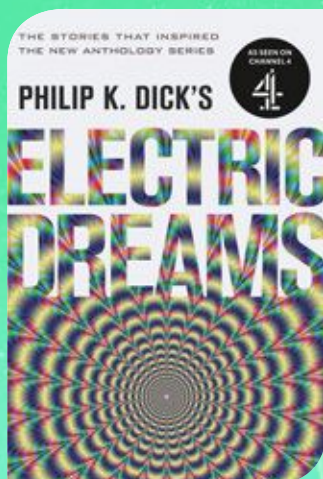
There are interesting elements, not least of which are the political machinations that surround the Weyland-Yutani Corporation, and welcome depth is provided for the mysterious company and the merger.

Telepathy and visions, common in the universe, are prominent themes, but never feel fully realised, and both the motives and actions of the cult – self-named Earthsavers – are as ineffective as they are random.

If you are an *Alien* completist then Foster's novel may well satisfy, as it adds texture to parts of the universe rarely touched before. If you approach this expecting backstory to the relationships central to the film, and to the motivations and personalities of the main crew, you will sadly be disappointed.

JOHN TOWNSEND

★★★★★★★★★★ 5



PHILIP K. DICK'S ELECTRIC DREAMS

AUTHOR: PHILIP K. DICK / PUBLISHER:
GOLLANCZ / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Philip K. Dick needs no introduction in the world of cult TV and sci-fi. His work has created some of the most seminal works of cinema and television including *Blade Runner*, *Total Recall*, *Minority Report* and *The Man in the High Castle* to name but a few. Now, *Electric Dreams* is a new anthology which has launched on Channel 4 in the UK which adapts ten of PKD's short stories for the screen and includes casting such as Bryan Cranston and Steve Buscemi; this accompanying book has the original stories all in one place, *STARBURST* took a look at what is to come.

Electric Dreams includes a variety of stories all set in the future, all with noir-ish elements, mystery, postmodernism and the political statements that are

familiar in PKD's work. These include: *Exhibit Piece*, which focuses on a historian who debates his sense of reality amidst a 20th century exhibition; *The Commuter*, in which the aptly named protagonist makes sense of where his town has gone; and *The Hood Maker*, which sees a government agent come into conflict with a group of telepathic 'hoods'. All the stories include a foreword from the creative minds of each corresponding episode, including Ronald D. Moore (of *Star Trek: DS9* fame), Matthew Graham (Life on Mars/Ashes to Ashes), and Kalen Egan (*The Man In The High Castle*).

As far as the stories are concerned, they are an excellent introduction to any only just discovering PKD; they still seem futuristic (even though PKD's vision of 'the future' is set in the

years we are now living in), and you get a sense of PKD's views on the world such as preserving cultural history in the face of bland, monochrome 'progress' and to stand against what governments will become (or is that have become?). However, some of PKD's short stories can be hit-or-miss, some seem too constrained or are resolved quickly and inadequately.

Electric Dreams gives the reader a really balanced view of PKD's work in light of the series to come: some stories you will hope get a really faithful treatment, others you hope the adaptation will do a better job of.

NICK BLACKSHAW

★★★★★★★★★★ 7



A PLAGUE OF GIANTS

AUTHOR: KEVIN HEARNE / PUBLISHER:
ORBIT / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

experiences during the times of strife to a field of refugee survivors, while a historian becomes increasingly entangled in a web of intrigue and espionage.

After mercilessly plundering various mythologies for his *Iron Druid Chronicles*, Kevin Hearne takes a crack at creating his own with the first in a new series called *Seven Kennings*, and makes a damn good job of it.

Each of the featured tales begins by relating interesting but relatively minor details of its protagonists' life, but when taken together they gradually weave into a history of the circumstances that led up to the wars with the giants, all the while expanding into an overview of the world itself. Some terminology is initially a little vague as context doesn't make its meaning immediately apparent,

but early concentration soon pays off as specific details become clearer, and prevents people from having to speak in unnatural expository ways.

The world is comprised of varied cultures and peoples that, like in David Gemmell's novels, are historical nations given a fantasy spin. Each society is based around an elemental force (the kennings of the series title) that certain people can wield as magic at the cost of burning away their lifespan, giving the setup the combined feel of animated series *Avatar: The Last Airbender* and *Jim Butcher's Codex Alera* novels.

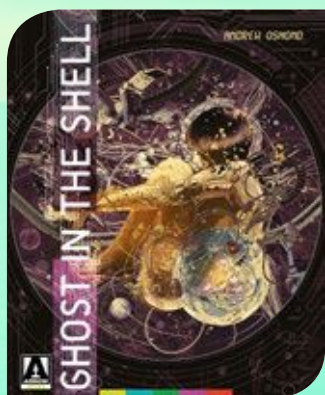
The tone is far less flippant than that of *Iron Druid*, and all the more engaging for it. That's not to say it's entirely devoid of humour – a band of young people who become the first to

acquire animal affinity have a lot of fun coming up with impressive titles for themselves – but the seriousness with which the book treats its subject matter results in you perceiving its events as being as historic as its characters do.

A Plague of Giants is epic in scope, heavy in construction, meticulous in detail and primed in possibilities. A full story in its own right and a superb jumping-off point for a new fantasy series, the surface has only been scratched of where it will develop, and the secrets and mysteries yet to be revealed have the potential to grow into something uniquely compelling.

ANDREW MARSHALL

★★★★★★★★★★ 9



GHOST IN THE SHELL

AUTHOR: ANDREW OSMOND / PUBLISHER: ARROW BOOKS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Now that the critical and commercial disappointment that was this year's live-action

version of *Ghost in the Shell* is safely behind us, this brief but enthusiastically-written overview of the excellent anime (and manga) that started it all couldn't have arrived at a better time.

Beginning with Hollywood's ecstatic reaction to Mamoru Oshii's original film and ending with a surprisingly optimistic take on Rupert Sanders' flashy but creatively bankrupt remake, author Andrew Osmond niftily pilots us through everything we'd ever wanted to know about the *Ghost in the Shell* franchise but were afraid to ask – from Masamune Shirow's iconic manga to how Oshii adapted the manga from page to screen and created a version that, in many ways, is both complimentary and superior to Shirow's vision... to how Kusanagi, Shirow's hypersexualised femme fatale heroine, was redesigned for the

movie because (in Oshii's words) "In the manga, Kusanagi's boobs are the size of her head, so she can't really hold a gun"... to the fans who are confused about where *Ghost in the Shell* is actually set (hint: the city in the anime and the city in the manga are very different places)... to Oshii's frustrations with Kazunori Ito, the anime's screenwriter, to the shame composer Kenji Kawai still feels for choosing music over a possible career in nuclear engineering... to the problems of selling *Ghost in the Shell* to foreign markets to the connection between *Ghost*, *Blade Runner*, William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, and other lesser-known Japanese 'cybertoons'.

In fact, for a book that is just 120 pages long, Osmond manages to cover a lot of ground. His passion for the franchise is obvious, and his

writing is slick and chatty. The book features some nice full-colour illustrations as well.

Still, it's hard to know who Osmond is actually writing this book for: hardcore fans (who will already have all this information) will no doubt be disappointed by the lack of fine detail and occasional fans, who will probably be more interested in the world of the characters than in the minds of the people who created them, will almost certainly be left dissatisfied. Still, as a primer for anyone who's new to the *Ghost in the Shell* universe (or who wants to be reassured that the *ScarJo* clusterbleep isn't where the series began and ends), this is definitely worth a peek.

IAN WHITE

★★★★★★★★★★ 6



STAR WARS ART: RALPH MCQUARRIE – 100 POSTCARDS

ARTIST: RALPH MCQUARRIE / PUBLISHER: ABRAMS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

No movie series has as many iconic images as Star Wars. From the worn-down wastes of Tatooine to the crisp corridors of the Death Star, its retro-future aesthetic imprinted itself firmly into pop culture from the 1977 get-go, and has continued to impress since. One man is responsible for this – no, not

George Lucas, we're talking about Ralph McQuarrie (OK, so George played a big role as well, obviously, plus all the production designers, costume makers, associate producers, etc. etc. – film is collaborative!).

The point being – Ralph McQuarrie was great! Possibly cinema's most revered concept artist, he painted countless concepts during pre-production for all three original Star Wars films. This new collection (we hesitate to call it a book, despite the section of the mag we're filing it in) brings together one hundred of those images in the form of postcards. It's actually a spin-off from a previous book, *Star Wars Art: Ralph McQuarrie*, this time with the focus on a finer selection of artworks – it's not as definitive a collection as that book, nor does it provide the same context and behind the scenes info.

What it does do, though, is

allow you to really admire the mastery of these paintings. The postcards are landscape and quite big – about 23.5 by 11 cm – so great for looking at, putting on your wall, or even, if you can bear to give one up, posting. They also come in a case that can be used as a frame, with your choice of card placed at the front of the pack so it can take pride of place on your shelf.

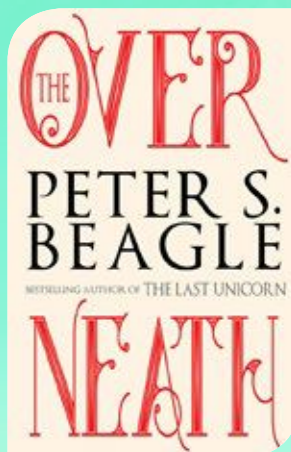
The art itself is a stunning and fascinating insight into the design of the movies. Some of these images you'll have seen before, on book covers for example, while other ones will be completely new to you and just as interesting as the more famous ones. Throughout them all, McQuarrie's style is cinematic, full of character, and evocative; you can imagine the pictures coming to life on the screen, and sometimes you will even recognise images

that were directly translated into camera shots. Even more intriguingly, there are concepts for locations and scenes that never made it to film, such as the planets Had Abaddon and Sicemon, both of which were cut from early drafts of the Return of the Jedi script – though the Had Abaddon concepts later inspired the Coruscant and Mustafar scenes we saw in the prequels and Rogue One.

All in all, this is a gorgeously presented selection of equally gorgeous artwork, not to mention much more affordable than the – albeit more comprehensive – book it's spun off from; it's a product that's difficult not to recommend to Star Wars fans.

KIERON MOORE

★★★★★★★★★★ 9



THE OVERNEATH

AUTHOR: PETER S. BEAGLE / PUBLISHER: TACHYON PUBLICATIONS / RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 30TH

Peter S. Beagle is a remarkable writer. Almost half a century after the release of the book that made him famous – *The Last Unicorn* – and now in his 78th year, he continues to produce exceptional work; *The Overneath*, an enchanting collection of short stories which – fans won't be surprised to hear – also includes one or two new tales about unicorns, will only consolidate his legend even further. This anthology is a triumph.

The *Overneath* comprises thirteen tales, two of which feature one of Beagle's best-loved characters, the 'last of the red hot swamis' Schmendrick the Magician, and the first entry (*The Green-Eyed Boy*) is a particular delight because it is a 'sorcerer's apprentice' type prequel to *The Last Unicorn*, recounting young

Schmendrick's first encounter with the powerful wizard Nikos. It is an emotional opening, wise and romantic, and sets us up perfectly for the stories that are to follow (it will also make you want to dig out your dog-eared copy of *The Last Unicorn* and re-read it again).

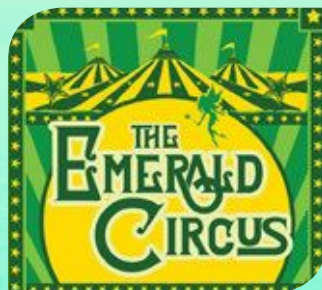
In a collection where every tale is as good as the one that preceded it, it's hard to choose favourites, but there are three that, from a personal point of view, really stand out from the rest of the pack: *Underbridge*, about the real-life (well, kind of) Fremont Bridge Troll is a fantastic story about a university professor in crisis who becomes obsessed by the concrete troll that is a local landmark (with unexpected results)... *Kaskia*, about an unhappily married man who

begins messaging an alien on an unusual new laptop... and *Music, When Soft Voices Die*, which has a gentle steampunk sensibility wrapped around a central theme that hits you like a sledgehammer.

Maybe that's what is so compelling about Beagle's prose. He takes the extraordinary, makes it real, makes us care, and then swerves us into entirely unexpected territory. His storytelling is like the weaving of a spell – elegant, hypnotic and deeply exciting – but there's an edge to it, a dangerousness, and an acute wisdom about the risks taken by the human heart. Absolutely breathtaking.

IAN WHITE

★★★★★★★★★★ 10



THE EMERALD CIRCUS

AUTHOR: JANE YOLEN / PUBLISHER: TACHYON PUBLICATIONS / RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 30TH

Retellings of fairy tales and myths are a popular trend at the moment, but the latest work from Jane Yolen is much more ambitious than most. Instead of just giving us one revamp of

a well-known tale, the Nebula Award-winning author spins a huge variety of familiar stories in a fresh direction in her newest short story collection.

In *The Emerald Circus*, there are retellings of everything from Alice in Wonderland to Arthurian legend to the works of Hans Christian Andersen, Emily Dickinson and Edgar Allan Poe. There are also a few original stories spread throughout as well, but these still play with archetypal fantasy elements such as witches and magic. The breadth of Yolen's reach is impressive and both her inventive imagination and love for these original stories shine through with each tale.

The best retellings have a strong 'what if...?' question at the core and Yolen delivers that every time here. One of the most

startling stories in the collection is *Lost Girls*, a reworking of Peter Pan in which the Boy Who Never Grows Up kidnaps young girls to cook and clean for him and his Lost Boys. *Blown Away*, meanwhile, from which the title of the book comes, takes *The Wizard of Oz* and strips away all the fantasy, leaving it as the tale of an amnesiac girl who is separated from her family in a twister.

The key to the success of Yolen's work is that – though they often are these things – her retellings aren't merely shocking and dark for the sake of it. Through her new versions of these tales, she explores fresh themes and ideas that are usually already latent within the original story. Often Yolen gives the material a feminist slant, such as a brave, clever version of Alice slaying

monsters in Wonderland and a kind of suffragette uprising occurring in Neverland. Elsewhere, she raises questions about mental illness, faith and more.

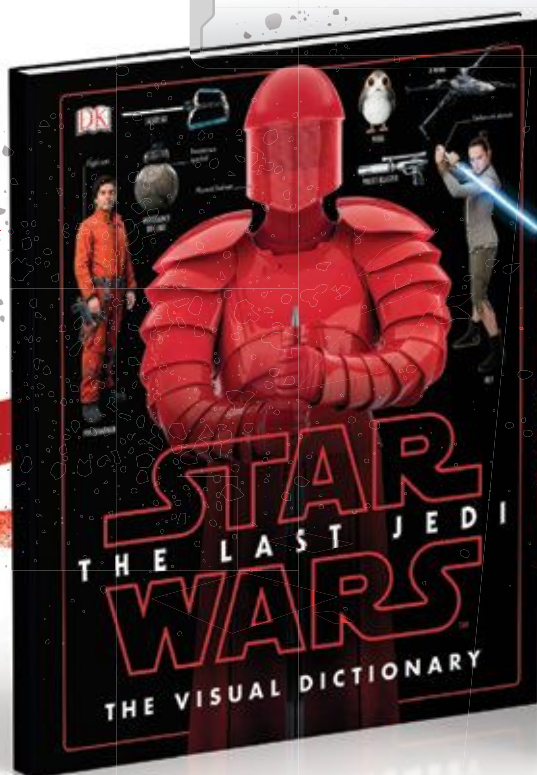
In short, *The Emerald Circus* is a real treat for fans of these kinds of retellings. Yolen's writing is sharp, charming, witty and moving and each time she manages to find a unique way to look at these stories that we have known since childhood. Whether you have come for the reworkings of fairy tales, children's fiction or classic literature, the range of targets in the collection means that every reader will find at least one story they connect with.

CHRISTIAN BONE

★★★★★★★★★★ 9

TAKE THE **STAR WARS**TM GALAXY HOME

OUT **15TH** DECEMBER



**PRE-ORDER THE BOOKS
NOW AT amazon**

**ALSO AVAILABLE
ULTIMATE STICKER
COLLECTION**



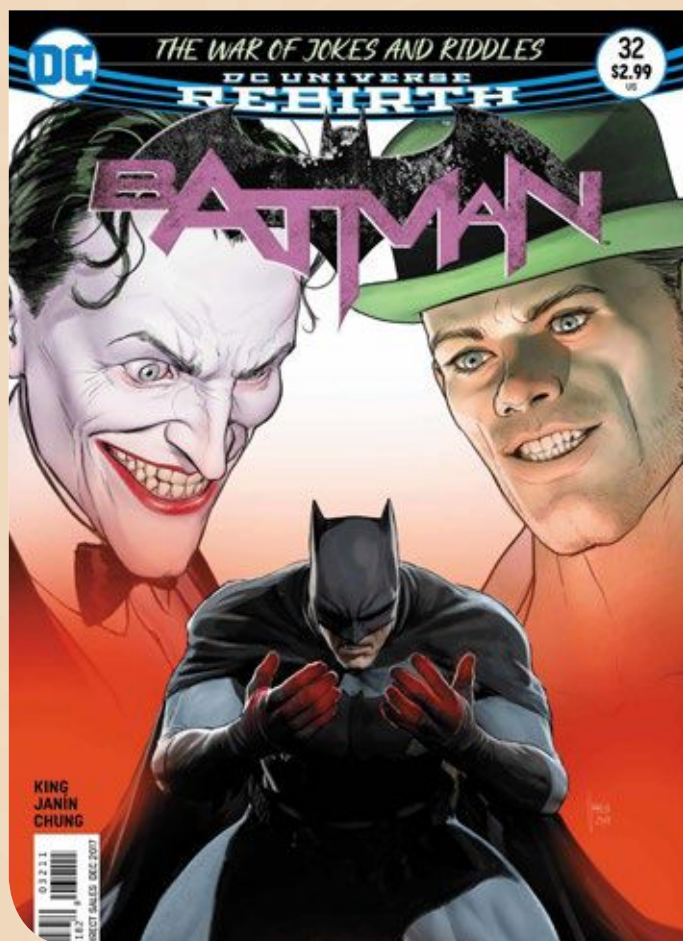
FREE Delivery and Unlimited One-Day Delivery with Amazon Prime are available on eligible orders. Terms and Conditions apply. See Amazon.co.uk for details. Amazon, Amazon.co.uk and the Amazon.co.uk logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Amazon EU S.à.r.l. or its affiliates.



© & TM 2017 LUCASFILM LTD. Used Under Authorization.

VIEW FROM THE WATCHTOWER

GARETH EVANS PULLS MONITOR DUTY TO BRING YOU THE LATEST FROM THE WORLD OF COMIC BOOKS



In the time since I last wrote this column, a lot of controversy has come from the convention circuit.

Marvel announced a partnership with the Northrop Grumman Corporation. Marvel claims that this partnership was meant to focus on science and technology. This is all well and good but Northrop Grumman is a well-known defence contractor and promoting a gun merchant is not a good look for a comic book company. This decision resulted in a lot of well-deserved condemnation towards Marvel, and the company promptly cancelled the partnership. It is difficult to believe that Marvel wasn't aware that this decision would look bad. This is just an ill-considered move by the company. Hopefully, the backlash will convince Marvel to think before they announce similar promotions in future.

The Lakes International Comics Art Festival (LICAF) also attracted criticism recently. Fellow comics journalist Zainab Akhtar raised the point that there wasn't much diversity among the convention's scheduled artists. A representative for the convention was very dismissive of her concerns, and accused Akhtar of holding a grudge. This

has since been apologised for, but some artists have since declared that they will be avoiding the convention due to how Akhtar's concerns were handled. This is an important topic and I would advise people do some further reading on it. Akhtar herself has deleted her Twitter account in response to personal attacks that have been made against her. This is appalling and I would like to reiterate my hope that our readers are not among those who act in such a manner.

For those unaware, the dominant comic book distributor is Diamond Comics, handles the distribution for the biggest companies in the industry. Shortly before the recent New York Comic Convention, Oni Press announced that it would be dropping Diamond comics in favour of Simon & Schuster. I imagine a fair few eyes will be on Oni Press to see how this decision will work out for them. If distribution through Simon & Schuster turns out to be beneficial for Oni, other companies might decide to follow suit.

Batman #32 featured Selina's long-awaited answer to Batman's proposal, and her answer was yes! Even those who have not read the issue itself might be aware of this, as

DC decided to announce her response before the issue was released. This is part of what has been DC's approach to publicity since it launched the New 52 six years ago. Before, it might have kept the spoiler to discussion on its own website, but DC is increasingly trying to garner publicity for its storylines by releasing details to outside media. This approach is part of making comics less insular (albeit not the full solution).

Batman #32 also revealed what Batman considers to be his greatest source of shame. Bruce explains to Selina that at the conclusion of the *War of Jokes and Riddles*, he almost killed the Riddler, but was stopped by the Joker. On the one hand, the importance of Batman's no-kill rule to his character is undeniable. On the other, this doesn't feel like that big a reveal due to how many times he has had to be stopped from killing a villain in the past. For example, Batman almost strangled the Joker during the *Hush* storyline. He has admitted that the possibility of killing his enemies has occurred to him. He even used a gun in *Final Crisis*. By this point, it feels a little played out in terms of dramatic developments.

DC has announced another *Dark Nights: Metal* tie-in. *Dark Knights Rising: The Wild Hunt* will be released February 14th, 2018. I'm not looking forward to another *Metal* tie-in. The ones I've read so far haven't been bad; to the contrary, it has been fun to read the backstories of the various evil versions of Batman (I'm even looking forward to reading the backstory of the Jokerised Batman). My problem is that the series is already tie-in heavy, and it is starting to show in the main title. *Dark Nights: Metal #3* was heavily dependent on the supplementary material for its set-up. Unless you had read those issues, then there was no clear link between how #2 ended and #3 began. This is a problem that could only get worse as DC pumps out even more tie-in material. It would be a shame to see such a promising event falter because too many important plot points were told outside of that event's main comic.

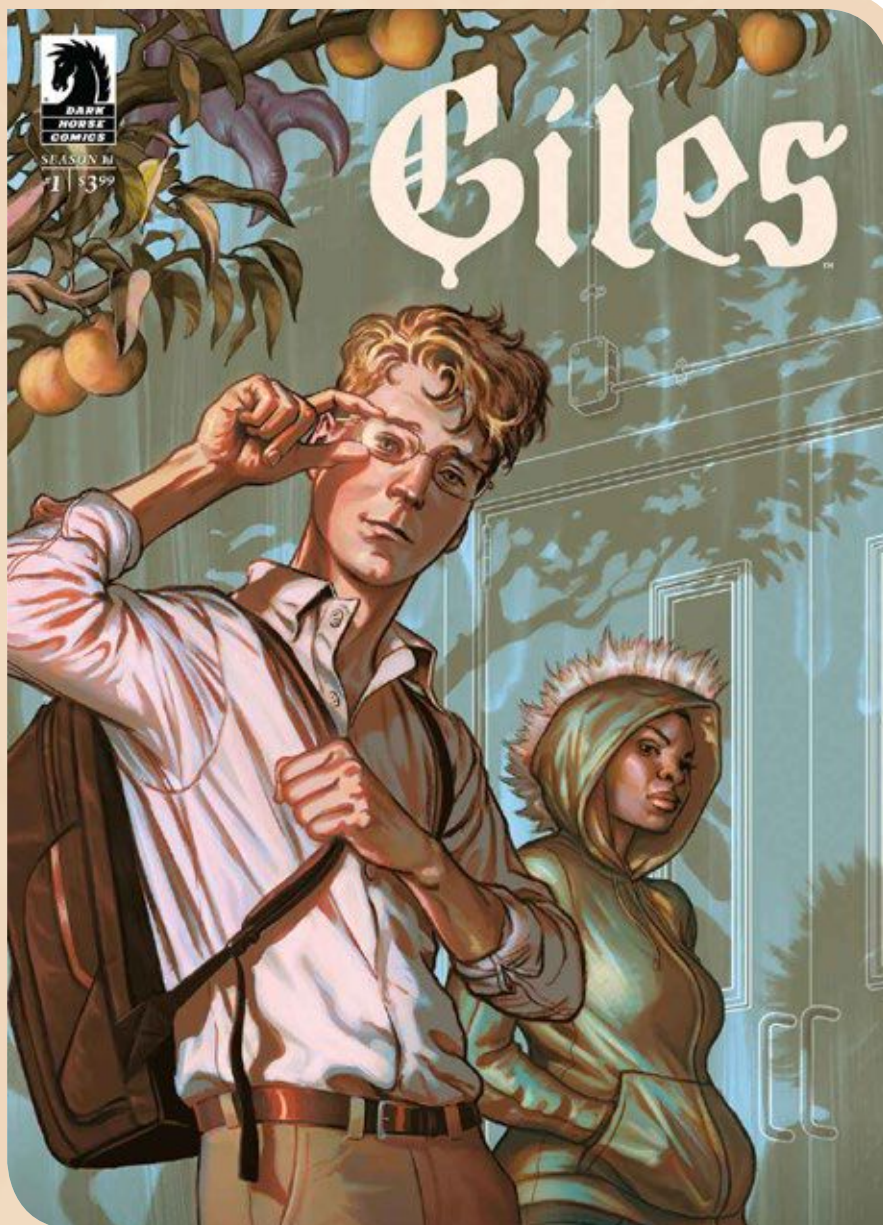
On a side note for anyone keeping track: that two of the *Dark Knights* were a result of fused consciousness turned out to just be a coincidence.

There have been plenty of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* spin-off comics over the years, and Dark Horse has announced the arrival of another. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Giles* is a miniseries that will see Giles go undercover as a student to find out why teachers have been going missing. Buffy fans may remember an episode in which Giles (and the other Sunnydale adults) were taken back to a teenage frame of mind. The idea of Giles having to navigate high school but with his adult personality does have humorous potential. #1 goes on sale on February 28th, 2018.

Dark Horse also announced that it will be releasing a comic book adaptation of Neil Gaiman's *A Study in Emerald*, a story that combines Sherlock Holmes and Lovecraftian fiction. The comic book version is due for release June 20th, 2018. Adaptations of Neil Gaiman's prose have been really popular lately. I wonder what else of his we might see turned into a graphic novel.

Dark Horse has collaborated with Nintendo on books about Nintendo's *Legend of Zelda* franchise. The two companies are set to continue that collaboration with a graphic novel based on the Switch game *Arms*. The title was only announced recently, and isn't out until next autumn, so details are scarce.

Well-known television series *Battlestar Galactica* has two incarnations: the 1978 original and the 2003 remake. These two versions of the show are set to meet in comic book form. This will be the first time such a crossover will take place. The miniseries will



be published by Dynamite Comics, written by Peter David, and the art will be done by Johnny Desjardins.

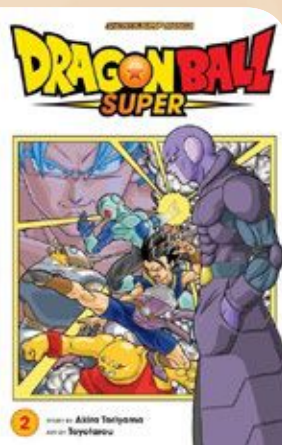
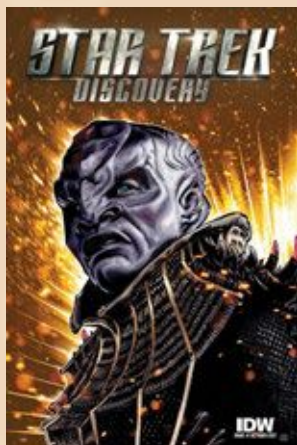
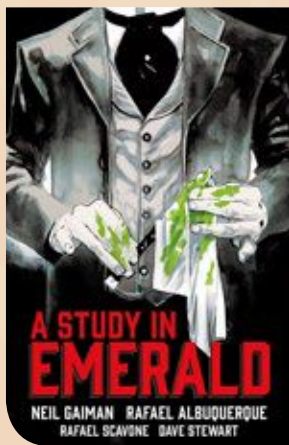
IDW recently announced its plans for the *Star Trek* comic book license. *Star Trek Discovery* was only released recently but IDW are already planning a series of comics. *Star Trek Discovery* will be published alongside a range of other ongoing titles. Other series that have been announced are

Star Trek: Waypoint (an anthology series), and *New Visions* (written by John Byrne and set in the original timeline).

Anyone who enjoyed reading the first volume of the *Dragon Ball Super* manga will be pleased to know the second volume is on its way. Volume Two will be released December 28th, 2017. It will continue the manga adaptation of *Super's* Universe 6 v Universe 7 tournament.

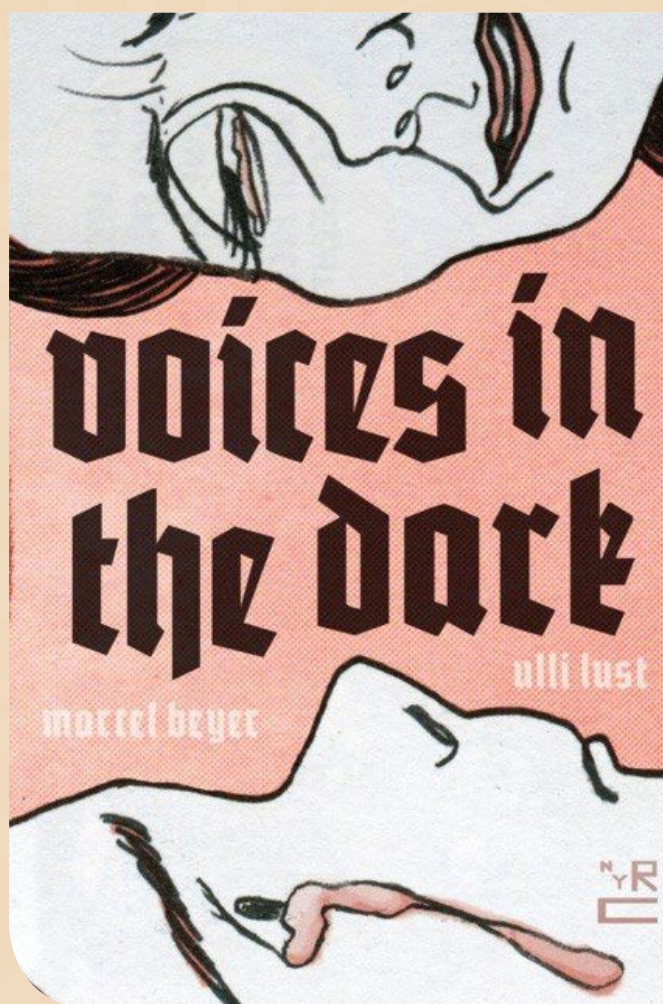
Funding is currently being sought on Kickstarter for a book by long-time Batman writer Paul Dini. *Boo & Hiss* is a graphic novel about a cartoon cat and mouse combo with a twist. Unlike Tom, Hiss actually catches his target. This turns out to be a pyrrhic victory as Boo returns from the dead to exact his revenge. Paul Dini has a long history of working with cartoons, so he is a good fit for the material. At the time of writing, the campaign hasn't reached its goal. It is only a few thousand dollars away from its goal and it still has several days to go, so I'm confident that it will be funded.

That is all for this month's comic book news. As always, I await your thoughts on what you are reading on Twitter (@OneTrueGareth)



REVIEWS

THE LATEST COMIC
BOOK RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED



VOICES IN THE DARK

AUTHOR: MARCEL BEYER / ADAPTED BY & ARTIST: ULLI LUST / PUBLISHER: NEW YORK REVIEW COMICS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Is the voice the seat of the soul? Sound engineer Hermann Karnau thinks so, and he's obsessed with recording the voice in all its infinite variations - from the ranting of leaders to the sounds of his neighbour's lovemaking to the gargled whispers of the dying - in an effort to decode the voice's secrets. It is work that consumes him, and has brought him to the attention of powerful men in the Third Reich. No longer will Hermann be reduced to setting up microphones at the Nazi rallies, or scurrying through the trenches trying to pick up enemy radio traffic. Now he is among the elite, and welcomed into the household of Hitler's Propaganda Minister

Joseph Goebbels. Here he develops an unlikely friendship with Goebbels' children, and especially Helga, the eldest daughter. Goebbels has forbidden Karnau to record his children's voices but, when Karnau and the children are reunited in Hitler's Berlin bunker during the last days of the war, the sound engineer steals an opportunity... and unwittingly eavesdrops on a heartbreaking human tragedy, a recording that will remain with him forever.

Voices in the Dark is Ulli Lust's first fictional graphic novel, based on the novel The Karnau Tapes by Marcel Beyer. It is a powerful, deeply moving, richly textured work of

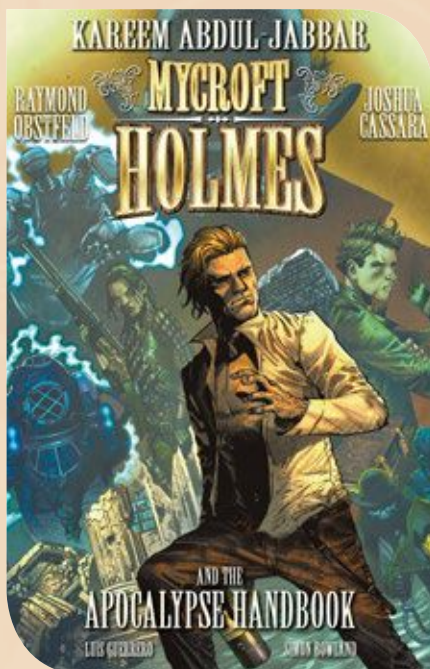
art. Lust's deceptively simple caricature-like drawings convey intricate emotion in a way that more precise photorealistic illustrations might miss - this is art that's designed to draw us completely into the story, not dazzle us superficially with how lifelike it is. Lust doesn't need realism to accomplish her task, she knows how to convey 'real life' with just a small sideways glance or the stoop of a shoulder, the trail of a tear rolling down Helga's face, and it connects with us on a gut level. Narratively, the story works beautifully as well. The novel switches seamlessly between Hermann's muddily hued world (and his precise,

cramped handwriting) and the subdued oranges and pinks of the various summery retreats where the children play (together with Helga's childish handwriting, all capital letters that never stray from the lines of her notebook). They are both, in very different ways, likeably naïve characters who are eventually going to be forced kicking and screaming into the truth of the world, and when the final turn of the story arrives (commendably without melodrama) it is deeply affecting. Very highly recommended.

IAN WHITE

★★★★★★★★★ 9





MYCROFT HOLMES AND THE APOCALYPSE HANDBOOK

AUTHORS: KAREEM ABDUL-JABBAR, RAYMOND OBSTFELD / **ARTISTS:** JOSHUA CASSARA, LUIS GUERRERO / **PUBLISHER:** TITAN COMICS / **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW

Everyone knows Sherlock's story, but what about his older - and apparently smarter - brother Mycroft? How did he become, as is hinted in Arthur Conan Doyle's stories, the head of the British Secret Service? Well, this untold tale is now being revealed by an unlikely source - basketball legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar!

Along with co-writer Raymond Obstfeld, Abdul-Jabbar has penned this Titan comics series to act as a prequel to his recent Mycroft Holmes novel. Taking us back to when Mycroft was an unruly student at Cambridge University, The Apocalypse Handbook sees the young genius handpicked by Queen Victoria herself to go on a globe-trotting mission to stop a threat to the British Empire.

First of all, if you're a Sherlock Holmes purist, you'll want to stay away from this comic as, while the writers have clearly used the original Doyle stories as a springboard, they have created something very different in tone and spirit. It's a high-octane James Bond-esque adventure, full of ultra-violence, nudity and lashings of steampunk.

What The Apocalypse Handbook does capture that is essential to any Holmesian story (whether it focusses on Sherlock or Mycroft) is the intelligence of the protagonist. What's the point of reading about a Holmes if their USP - their incredible deductive reasoning - is not on display? Thankfully, the narrative is peppered with small moments of detection as well as Sherlock-like mammoth leaps of logic

throughout.

The best part about the comic, though, is the characterisation of Mycroft Holmes. Far away from the overweight, sedentary figure of Doyle, Abdul-Jabbar's Mycroft is not just an adventurer but also an all-round womanising cad. He's so sociopathic in his attitude to human life that he makes 007 look like a kitten. Nonetheless, some fascinating flashbacks tease how he - and Sherlock - came to be this way. And, no, there's not a secret evil sister in sight!

Still, even the finest comic book script would fall apart if it wasn't matched with some equally talented artwork. There's no fear of that here, however, as Joshua Cassara illustrates the story with verve and energy. Every panel is rich with detail and he adds a vitality to the action scenes too. A shout-out also deserves to be made to colourist Luis Guerrero for his deep and moody colour palette.

On the whole, Mycroft Holmes and the Apocalypse Handbook is a worthy companion piece to the Mycroft Holmes novel - although it is just as effective on its own terms as well. Thanks to some smart, zippy writing from Abdul-Jabbar and Obstfeld and Cassara's top-notch art, this graphic novel is a slam dunk (sorry, Kareem, we couldn't resist).

CHRISTIAN BONE

★★★★★★★★★★ 9



VAMPIRES EVERYWHERE

AUTHOR: GEORGE LENNOX / **ARTIST:** THOMAS CRIELLY, JAMES DEVLIN / **PUBLISHER:** CULT EMPIRE COMICS / **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW

The port town of Stonehaven in northeast Scotland has come under the scourge of the bloodsucking undead. As the infestation takes hold, vampire hunter Alexander McLean is summoned to deal with the creatures, if he can only first deal with the demons of his own past.

After the balls-to-the-wall madness

of Vietnam Zombie Holocaust, George Lennox now brings us the slightly more prosaically titled but no less histrionic Vampires Everywhere (also a neat reference to seminal vampire flick The Lost Boys). Set in the late 19th century, the comic foregoes the endless layers of postmodernism and reimagining that have compounded upon vampire mythology in recent times, and takes them back to the night-borne chills the very notion of the creatures evoked from when the modern perception of them was popularised almost two centuries ago.

Right from the opening page of a storm-tossed ghost ship crashing into granite cliffs that echoes the Demeter running aground at Whitby, the inspiration of the genre originals is writ large across every moment. It feels like an elegant and menacing vampire tale that Hammer might have made in its '60s heyday, but one that also just happens to feature a badass band of mercenary nutters.

The vibrancy of the artwork belies the darkness of the story it brings to life, from the colourful interiors of an upper-class mansion to flares of burning torchlight and arterial geysers spraying bare walls in viscous crimson. Even the muted browns of rural Aberdeenshire are alive with the salted tang of coastal air, framed against gunmetal skies shot through with the burning gold of dusk or the oppressive indigo darkness of unforgiving night.

Vietnam Zombie Holocaust had a lively cinematic energy to it, and Vampires Everywhere continues that tradition, featuring flourishes such as weaponry like overpowered crossbows, makeshift explosives and a stake-shooting Gatling gun, or CG-esque visuals like the turquoise

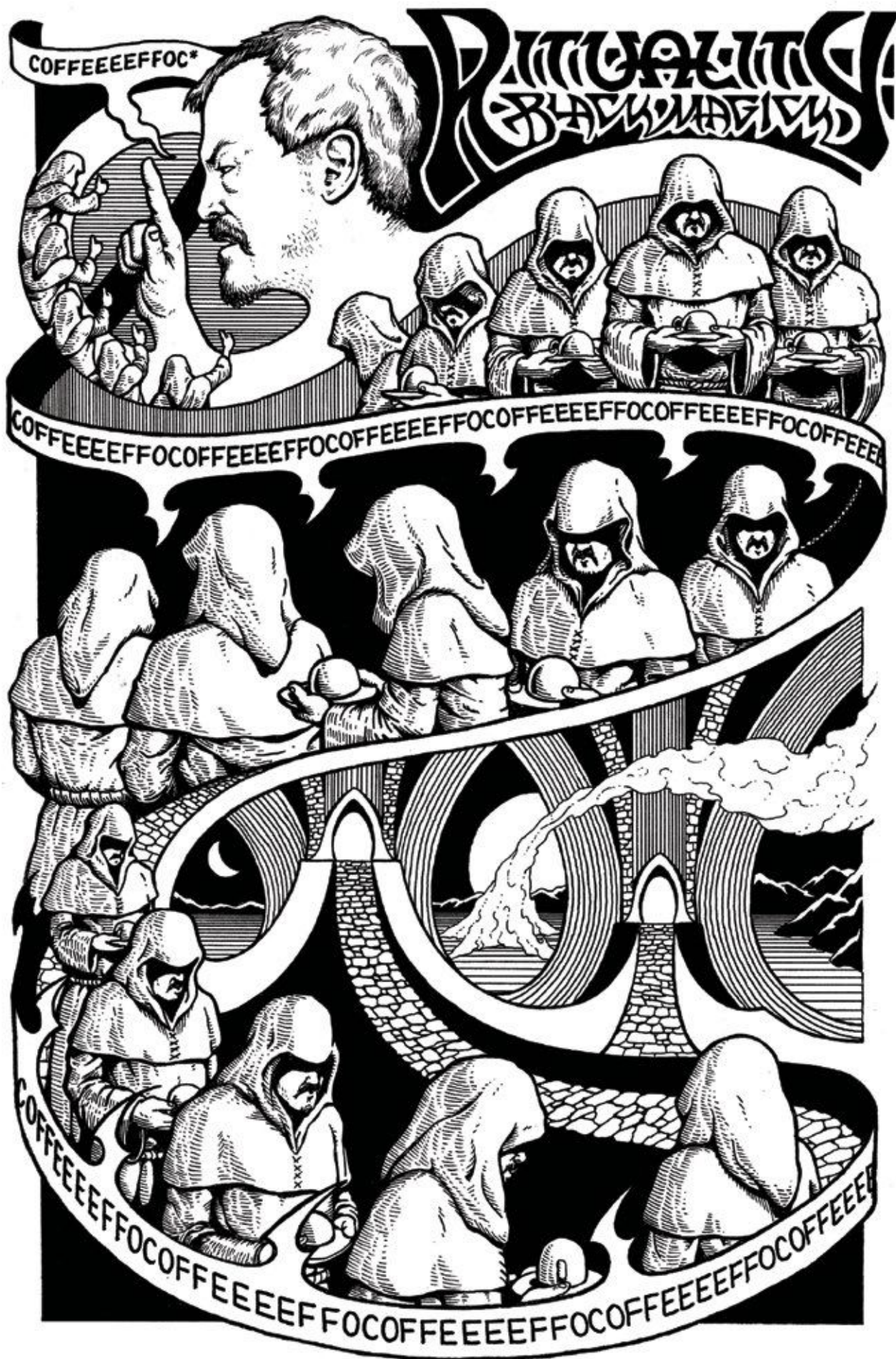
luminescence into which vampires detonate upon death.

Vampires Everywhere feels simultaneously classic and modern. It incorporates both the oppressive dread of traditional vampire tales and the fast-paced action of more recent interpretations, seamlessly meshing the two together in a high-octane combustion of visceral bloodletting and Gothic terror.

ANDREW MARSHALL

★★★★★★★★★★ 8







ANIME-NATION

A MONTHLY
ROUND UP FROM
THE WORLD OF ANIME AND
MANGA FROM
LITTLEANIMEBLOG.COM'S
DOMINIC
CUTHBERT



Game On for Three Upcoming SWORD ART ONLINE Projects
Sword Art Online is back in a big way, announcing two more anime plus a new console release. **Sword Art Online: Alicization** is first off the mark, based on the Alicization arc of Reki Kawahara's light novels. Also loading is a new **Alternative Gun Gale Online** series with new main players, including **Berserk**'s Yôko Hikasa as Pitohui, and the voice of Jonathan Joestar, Kazuyuki Okitsu, as M. If that's not quite enough **SAO**, or you just miss **Sinon**, the game **Sword Art Online: Fatal Bullet** is confirmed for western release February 23rd.

YOUR NAME Goes to Hollywood

J. J. Abrams' Bad Robot Productions is teaming up with Paramount Pictures to produce a live-action take on Makoto Shinkai's ridiculously popular **Your Name**. Both Abrams and Bad Robot's Lindsey Weber will tag in with the anime's original producer Genki Kawamura at TOHO, raising hopes of perhaps America's first faithful anime adaptation. Throw in writer Eric Heisserer, who worked on 2016's **Arrival**, and all the pieces are in place for some seriously tear-jerking sci-fi.

FIST OF THE NORTH STAR Punches Up New Anime

Cult classic **Fist of the North Star** enjoyed its anime reascension with the 2006 prequel **Fist of the Blue Sky**, based on the manga from original creators Buronson, Nobuhiko Horie and Tetsuo Hara. That manga was recently rebooted as **Fist of the Blue Sky Regensis**, and now there's news that a new anime in the works under the similar title **Regensis**. No word yet on casting or release, but a visual was unveiled with the launch of the official website, suggesting more info soon to come.

Anime Industry a Trillionaire Thanks to Streaming

In 2016, anime earned 2.9 trillion yen (approx. £19.4 billion) for the first time in the industry's history. Calculations by the

Association of Japanese Animators took into account overseas distribution, which cashed in roughly 767.6 billion yen. While Netflix causes a hubbub with its \$8 billion funding for original content, including 30 new anime projects, these big bucks investments are changing the way anime is made. More funds are now being funnelled directly to studios, rather than via the middle man of the production committee machine. Streaming, and Netflix in particular, is restoring the struggling industry to a stable business model, better for artists and fans alike.

ASTRO BOY Stage Production Celebrates Creator's Birthday

Manga's honorary godfather Osamu Tezuka would have celebrated his 90th birthday next year. To commend his life and work there will be a new stage of **Pluto**, a spin-off from Tezuka's **Astro Boy**. In the alternate manga which retells the arc **The Greatest Robot on Earth**, there are sinister machinations and murder as written by Naoki Urasawa, supervised by the master's son Macoto Tezuka. Named for the arc's main villain, the stage production of **Pluto** launches in Tokyo in January, later to make stops in London, the Netherlands, Belgium and, lastly, Osaka.

MARCH COMES IN LIKE A LION Takes Stand Against Bullying

An old Japanese saying goes 'the nail that sticks out gets hammered down'. This cultural emphasis on not standing out from the crowd makes bullying a big problem, especially in schools. Japan's Ministry of Education, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) is collaborating with the anime **March Comes in Like a Lion** in a new anti-bullying initiative. Posters distributed in schools and colleges throughout the country feature little Hinata coming to lead Rei's aid, even though she herself is being bullied. They also feature the message 'I'll be your friend through it all' beside the phone number for MEXT's '24-hour child SOS' hotline.

THE LATEST RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED

REVIEWS



USHIO & TORA COMPLETE SERIES COLLECTION

BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: SATOSHI NISHIMURA / WRITERS: VARIOUS / STARRING: DAVID MATRANGA, BRETT WEAVER, JOHN SWASEY, LUCI CHRISTIAN, ALLISON SUMRALL, MARTY FLECK / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

This collection contains all 39 episodes of Ushio & Tora. Previous editions have been out of circulation for a while, so this release is a fresh chance for fans of the anime to get their hands on the complete series.

Tonally speaking, Ushio & Tora can be separated into two halves.

In the first half, the show is lighter. There aren't many episodes in which the plot carries over, and the titular characters are usually concerned with fighting the monster of the week. While there is humour throughout the show, there is more of it in the early part of the show. Since the big bad hasn't appeared yet, more focus is put on how the characters react to the various challenges they face.

The second half of Ushio & Tora is more serious. The major villain has shown up by this point and episodes are austere as a result. One of the anime's themes is the destructive power of hatred - how it can hurt someone to feel hatred as much as it does those around them. This theme slowly develops over the course of the collection's 39 episodes until it is front and centre. The show also loses its episodic format and the plots of the episodes flow more seamlessly; even though the words 'Part

2' don't appear often in an episode title, more than one episode towards the end of the show serves to resolve an episode that came before".

Ushio and Tora's change in tone may seem unbalanced when considering all of the episodes together, but it is a change that is earned. As convoluted as the plot can get, it stays grounded emotionally in its themes of anger, friendship, and moving past inner pain.

Different parts of the collection are therefore bound to appeal to different people. Viewers might enjoy the simple silliness on display early on, but be put off by the more complex story that develops, or vice versa.

Viewers can choose to watch this series in the original Japanese (with subtitles) or in English; Sub vs. Dub is an ongoing debate among anime viewers, but this collection lets viewers choose the approach they would prefer to take.

This release is a new opportunity to watch an anime that has been unavailable through legitimate means for a while. The series itself is an action-packed fantasy, with elements of classic Japanese horror. It can feel a bit overly complex at times, but the narrative ultimately comes together in a satisfying way that builds

on earlier story threads. Although it doesn't offer anything special in terms of special features, it is the most complete version of Ushio & Tora that it can be. It is also the best value for money for someone looking to watch this series as a whole.

Extras: Clean Opening Animations / Clean Closing Animations / Japanese Promo Videos / Also Available from Sentai Filmworks

GARETH EVANS

★★★★★★★★★★ 9





YU-GI-OH! ZEXAL SEASON 2 COMPLETE COLLECTION

DVD / CERT: PG / DIRECTOR: SATOISHI KUWABARA / WRITERS: VARIOUS / STARRING: ELI JAY, MARC THOMPSON, SEAN SCHEMMELE, EILEEN STEVENS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Bringing together the final season of Yu-Gi-Oh! Zexal and the first season of Yu-Gi-Oh! Zexal II (which was marketed outside Japan as *more of Zexal*). This collection represents something of a bridging point for the series.

The first half of the collection concludes the storyline that ran during the previous two seasons. These episodes manage to overcome some of the problems that plagued Zexal's previous

collection. The plot moves along at a good pace, answers are provided to series long questions, and Yuma isn't the only character to save the day. With the material given the conclusion to Yu-Gi-Oh! Zexal was as good as viewers could have hoped for.

The second half of the collection, in contrast, is all about build-up. The protagonists of this part of the show were teased at the end of season 3 of Zexal, and this

part of the box set spends more time fleshing them out. Because of how Zexal as a show was structured, the ending of this season feels more like a mid-point than Yu-Gi-Oh! season finales normally do.

A few of the second arc's episodes do feel like filler, but they are also endearing. This is particularly true of the villains. Girag and Alito benefit from two of the more fleshed-out personalities found among Yu-Gi-Oh! Villains. They support each other, and have their own interests. At times, it almost seems like they have forgotten that they are supposed to be villains.

This part of the episodes contained within this box set also attempts to give main character Yuma more of an arc. For the most part, this is handled well. The collection ends before it can be seen what long-term impact it will have, but it's built up to and executed well. There is, however, one noticeable flaw to this arc. At one point, Yuma's fusion with astral turns bad. This change to a dark Yuma is signified, in part, with Yuma's skin turning darker. The fact that turning black is used as a shorthand for evil is not a good look for the show. It mars what was otherwise a decent subplot.

Yu-Gi-Oh! Zexal Season 2 Complete Collection is an improvement on the episodes contained within the first collection. The first collection introduced a lot of new elements over its run without really bothering to build a cohesive direction or provide much explanation for them. There are still unanswered questions, but it is much easier to see what the show is doing with this collection. Its individual pieces make for a much more cohesive whole. This makes it easier to enjoy Yu-Gi-Oh! Zexal's strong points, like its good characterisation and silly sense of humour.

GARETH EVANS

+++++ 7



COWBOY BEBOP THE MOVIE (2001)

DUAL / CERT: 12 / DIRECTOR: SHINICHIRO WATANABE / SCREENPLAY: KEIKO NOBUMOTO / STARRING: KÔICHI YAMADERA, MEGUMI HAYASHIBARA, UNSHÔ ISHIZUKA / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Despite only running for 26 episodes in the late '90s, Cowboy Bebop's reputation as one of the most popular and influential anime series ever made continues to grow by the year. An arresting mash-up that might best be described as SF western noir, this beautifully animated saga of spacefaring bounty hunters would have been a guiltless pleasure even without its regular detours into the all-too-earthbound hang-ups of its argumentative central

quartet (plus dog).

One of the challenges facing this 2001 spin-off feature (also known as Cowboy Bebop: Knocking on Heaven's Door) was that the series ended on such a dramatic cliff-hanger that a direct follow-up would've been a tricky sell for the uninitiated. The answer was to set it between later episodes of the series (the majority view is that it falls between 'sessions' 22 and 23) but not to hold onto any major plot threads from

the telly version. This works a treat in a Thunderbirds Are Go (movie not woeful CGI show) sort of way, rewarding fans with a bigger version of the TV series and cleverly re-introducing the concept in a way that newcomers can easily pick up.

Shit gets serious when Vincent Volaju, a bearded weirdo criminal (think Jared Leto in cartoon form) stumbles out of a spectacular fuel tanker smash without a scratch, but the explosion triggers a terrible bio-terror virus. Turns out the Mars government have placed a huge bounty on his head, so in swoop the Bebop team. But they're not the only outfit hunting the hairy dude; he's the mentally damaged by-product of a military experiment to create immortal nano-soldiers, so the corporation that created him has dispatched its own super-agent Elektra Ovirowa to haul Vinnie back in. Fans of the series won't be shocked to hear that floppy-haired leading man Spike finds her rather alluring. Like the series, the plot here is fiendishly convoluted but serves as a platform for the main characters to deliver on the quirks and quarrels we expect

from them.

This Blu-ray release gets under the skin of the film with a wealth of short featurettes, storyboard and conceptual galleries. The movie was made as a traditional cel animation and the hi-def transfer makes the most of this, rendering the neon-flecked Bebop universe more beautifully down-and-dirty than ever before.

With a live-action American TV version in development (or should that be threatened?), now is a great time to get back into the original. While not the strongest story of the whole saga, Cowboy Bebop: The Movie is an extended dip in a uniquely mind-bending pool.

MICHAEL COLDWELL

+++++ 8





STARBURST recently caught up with Bryce Papenbrook and Trina Nishimura, voice actors and veterans of English dub anime who star as ATTACK ON TITAN's Eren Jaeger and Mikasa Ackerman.

STARBURST: Many people who are not especially into anime have been watching and enjoying *Attack on Titan*. What do you think it is about the series that resonates with people?

Bryce Papenbrook: I think there's a lot of crossover that resonated with people. In my opinion, it's reminiscent of a few different shows; if you take *Game of Thrones*, *The Walking Dead*, and *Lost* and kind of push them together into an anime, that's what I think of as *Attack on Titan*. It's not your typical show, it's just a good story, and it think that good storytelling just resonates.

Trina Nishimura: I totally agree. There's something about *Attack on Titan*'s themes that I think are overarching, especially in the world we live in right now. Socioeconomic issues like class and inconsistencies in distribution of wealth versus safety are thematically pretty prevalent, particularly in America but certainly across the world, and those themes that are really important and personal to people are right now being reflected back by the show in a way that's tangible and has a lot of action and encouragement to act. That's what I think people are really attracted to.

You both seem to be very lively and vivacious people. How do you go about getting into the mindset of characters who are so serious?

TN: We get that a lot actually! For me, as far as getting into character, I really think about the character as a whole and their world and where they came from, and once you put yourself in that mindset, it's like "Oh, I can tap into the end of the world." Mikasa's very different from Eren, and the things he has to do to get where he is are different from me, but

the stoicism from Mikasa is different from the anger of Eren, which is much harder.

BP: Eren is very angry, the whole time! There are a few things I do to get into character. During the recording of Season One, I stayed with Mike McFarland - the director of *Attack on Titan* - who really likes metal music and so driving to the studio every day would be thirty minutes of the RAWRRRAWRRRAWRR!!!! of deep, crazy metal music. So, I'd just go RAWRRRAWRRRAWRR!!!! as Eren needed, for eight hours a day. Other times, I have to tap into things that would cause me to be angry in my own life. I'm a very calm person, but there was this one moment with my poodles - little white fluffy maltipoos - and I had this bag of chips that I was really looking forward to eating, and when I came home

THOSE POODLES HAD EATEN MY CHIPS!! And THAT'S where I can harness the anger for Eren Jaeger!

The series has increasingly become an ensemble piece, but Eren is still the nominal protagonist. Despite this, many people would claim Mikasa as their favourite character. How do you both feel about this?

TN: Well, I did say I was more talented! I honestly don't feel that way. Like you said, it is an ensemble piece and everybody has a favourite, and I don't think that people like me or Bryce or anybody the most. As many people who come to me and say "Mikasa's my favourite character," I equally hear them go to Bryce and say "Eren's my favourite character." Each character has something that somebody can relate to. People can relate to the amount of anger that Bryce has to portray or the amount of dedication that Mikasa has towards her adopted family.

BP: I think it's very easy to like Mikasa. It's nice that a show - especially a Japanese anime - has such a strong and powerful female character, and she kind of takes that familial unit of Eren and Armin and herself and she's really the one that steps up to protect them. Eren doesn't think things through, and is so hot-headed we had a running joke throughout the whole recording: "Eren, no!" And then we'd start doing it as Armin, so it'd turn into [adopts high-pitched, feminine voice] "Eeeeren, noooooo!!!!" So I say something like [as Eren] "We have to go kill them!" [even girlier voice] "Eren no!" But Mikasa is always there and so level-headed, and just wants to protect her loved ones. So it's very easy to like her as a character. And Trina pulls it off extraordinarily.

TN: You're welcome, world!

Words: Andrew Marshall

ATTACK ON TITAN is currently streaming on Crunchyroll, Funimation, and Hulu (US only), and will be released on DVD and Blu-ray at a later date.



COSPLAY CATWALK

A MONTHLY
FOCUS ON
THE COSTUMED
ROLE-PLAY SCENE AT
FAN CONVENTIONS
AROUND THE
WORLD

HEAD OF MEDUSA COSPLAY

This month, we talk to Amanda Toms, whose creation of DIGIMON's Nefertimon X won the cosplay competition at Edinburgh Comic Con in April.

STARBURST: What made you want to cosplay as Nefertimon?

Amanda Toms: Gatomon was my favourite character from the *Digimon* franchise. I love mythology, Ancient Egypt, and armour, so when I saw Nefertimon in *Adventure 02*, I absolutely had to cosplay her. She's a combination of all my favourite things! I decided to create her X-Antibody version from the *Digimon* card game; she just looked so cool with her darker aesthetic!

How did you go about designing and constructing the costume?

I redesigned Nefertimon X to stand upright as opposed to being on all fours like a traditional sphinx. I created multiple drawings of how she could look and then altered them until I was happy with the results. I designed a tabard/belt piece to incorporate into the costume, which I think matched the character quite well. It actually has a pocket on the underside that allows me to keep the essentials like phone and money on me whilst being completely hidden. Constructing the costume was complicated. I used a wide variety of materials including EVA foam, Worbla, and upholstery foam to name a few. The headpiece was incredibly tricky to plan and make practically. I had to create accurate and to-scale drawings of the headpiece and create a 'master' made from MDF, insulation foam, and car body filler from which I moulded the Worbla to create the hollow sections such as the back and the ears (much like you do when making female breastplates).

Was it a complicated process?

The build was by far the most difficult I've done so far. It was my first build using Worbla and my first time sewing, so it was quite an overwhelming and frustrating experience! Trying to ensure that the bulky armour and headpiece didn't prevent movement was the most complicated part of the process. There's no point in the costume looking good if it's so completely impractical that you can't move!



Anthony Cutley Photography

How did your previous experience help in the build?

My previous costume experience helped with my general approach to planning and building the costume. Pattern-making was a skill that proved useful, especially when making my digitigrade legs. Having never sewn before, I figured the duct tape method of patterning would be an effective way to get the right shapes for the trousers. My previous experience helped me create the armour accurately. The shapes are unusual for this character's armour and trying to replicate that in Worbla was difficult. For pieces such as the pauldrons, I made a solid insulation foam 'master' and moulded over it. This enabled me to create the armour as light as possible and with no seam lines.

What other costumes have you made?

I have also made Minervamon, Sakuyamon and Kuzuhamon from *Digimon*. My most recent costume is Astrid Hofferson from *How to Train Your Dragon 2*.

What appeals to you about Digimon characters?

Digimon is incredibly nostalgic; I loved it as a kid. Whilst I love the storyline, the characters and the cheesy music, it's the designs that appeal to me most. They're edgy in their evolved forms, yet adorable in their rookie stages. What's not to love?

Do you have any personal favourites?

As I said, I love Gatomon's line. Ophanimon Falldown Mode is a particular favourite! I also love my flying hamster Patamon, he's just so cute!

Do you have anything else planned?

My next costume will be Bastet from *Smite* in her Arcane Assassin skin. Other projects I'm working on currently are Hiccup from *How to Train Your Dragon* and a Khajiit from *Skyrim*. There's a recurring theme here of battle kitty costumes...

Words: Andrew Marshall

You can check out Amanda's creations at [facebook.com/headofmedusacosplay](https://www.facebook.com/headofmedusacosplay)



PIXEL JUICE

NEWS AND PREVIEWS
IN GAMING
BY LEE PRICE



EA to Close Visceral Games

It's never pleasant to hear about a video game developer being closed down, but Visceral Games look to be on their way out. The **Dead Space** developers are now surplus to EA's requirements. This means the ambitious **Star Wars** game they were working on will be cancelled along with it, though EA has used the term 'reworked', which means they're probably going to take whatever made it interesting and change it beyond recognition. Basically, EA has used a bunch of business speak to say that they don't think the game will appeal to the widest possible audience. We're pretty sure that translates to "we didn't like the online elements and we're not

interested in providing an interesting single-player experience."

Can you tell that we're kind of bitter? Maybe we're wrong and EA is going to produce something amazing. Either way, it's a shame to see such a talented developer get the chop.

Nintendo Tops Hardware Sales

Nintendo may have been on death's door back in the Wii U days, but the combined power of the Switch, 3DS, and Nintendo Mini consoles has pulled them right back to the top of the hardware sales wars.

Sales of Nintendo consoles accounted for two-thirds of all hardware sales in the month

coming soon



NI NO KUNI II: REVENANT KINGDOM

PLATFORM: PC, PS4

RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 19TH

The beautiful Ni No Kuni was perhaps one of the most popular JRPGs of recent times, so it should come as no surprise that a sequel is on the way. Set several hundreds of years after the events of the first game, Revenant Kingdom seems to place as much of an emphasis on rebuilding the kingdom as it does the open-world RPG gameplay you'll enjoy. This town building element has been popular for years in JRPGs - Dark Cloud comes to mind - and it will be interesting to see how Ni No Kuni executes the concept without it taking too much away from the game itself.

of September, which will put the company in buoyant mood as the Christmas season approaches. Of course, Sony and Microsoft had a massive head start on the Switch, but that doesn't make it any less of an impressive achievement. After all, the PS4 Pro and Xbox One X are now making the rounds.

It looks like Nintendo's main console, coupled with some very clever tapping into the retro games market, has really helped the company to turn things around.

METAL GEAR SURVIVE Needs You to be Always Online

Do Konami want to destroy themselves? Let's ignore the whole Hideo Kojima fiasco and remember that a new **Metal Gear Solid** game has been a reason to get excited for decades.

Then we have **Metal Gear Survive**. As generic a zombie game as you're likely to find, it already looks set to fail. Konami has decided to give it an extra push by demanding that players are always online while playing, even when 'enjoying' the single-player mode.

Konami should ask gamers how that always online thing worked out for Microsoft when they announced the Xbox One.

If Konami don't want to be in the video games industry anymore, they should just say so and go away. It kind of feels like the company is taking its once-stellar reputation and is now doing everything it can to drag it through the mud so people will be okay with them just making Pachinko machines.



coming soon

MONSTER HUNTER WORLD

PLATFORM: PS4, XBOX ONE, PC

RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 26TH

Originally announced at E3 2017, Monster Hunter World looks set to follow the traditional gameplay of the massively popular series, with the graphical upgrades that come with a new generation of consoles. You're still tasked with hunting and either killing or capturing a bunch of monsters. You can use the loot you receive from these missions to upgrade your weapons, so that you can take on yet more monsters. It's simple, yet incredibly addictive, gameplay. The extended story mode should prove interesting, plus Capcom has pledged to bolster the game with free downloadable content.

The L.A. NOIRE Remaster is Coming

Rockstar has always played their cards close to their chest, as they only announced a remaster of **L.A. Noire** back in September, for a November 14th release.

The game is on its way and there's a pretty little trailer to accompany it. This news snippet is just here to tell you to buy it if you never got the opportunity the first time around. It's a great game that should be available by the time you have this magazine in your hands.

The Kinect is Going Away

Ah, the Microsoft Kinect. Once seemingly so integral to the company's plans, the Kinect has become something of a failure. No real games of note ever came out for the system, plus Microsoft managed to balls up any goodwill that it had when they tried to make it film players all of the time, regardless of whether or not they were using their Xbox Ones.

Microsoft has announced that they will no longer manufacture Kinect units. During its life, over 35 million Kinects found their way into homes, though we don't know how many of those were sold as part of package bundles with the Xbox One and 360.

SUNSET OVERDRIVE 2 Waits on Publisher

The original **Sunset Overdrive** was a brilliant game that brought an element of ridiculousness to the open-world genre. A launch title for the Xbox One, it garnered strong reviews and a fair amount of commercial success. Unfortunately, we haven't seen a sequel in the four years since its release.

Now we know the reason. A recent tweet from Insomniac Games suggests that the only reason we haven't seen **Sunset Overdrive 2** yet is because the company has been unable to find a publisher. Microsoft apparently don't want to be involved, so Insomniac need somebody else to get on board and provide a little funding and support.

So... any publishers reading this may want to get on that!



COMING SOON

GAL*GUN 2

PLATFORM: PS4, SWITCH

RELEASE DATE: Q1 2018

We're not quite sure what to make of this one. You take control of some guy who has apparently become so popular with the ladies that he almost literally has to fight them off with a stick. We're sure there's no fantasy projectionist going on here. Anyway, you have a special pheromone gun that you must use to ward off the amorous advances of scores of young women while you go on the search for the perfect woman. It all sounds very ridiculous and we have to wonder if this will find any success in the UK market. The first game did shift 200,000 units though, so there must be a niche market somewhere.

COMING SOON



DISSIDIA FINAL FANTASY NT

PLATFORM: PS4

RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 30TH

Dissidia has always offered an interesting blend of fighting and RPG mechanics, but NT looks to change it all up with a completely new battle system that we're sure existing fans are going to want to explore. The game also takes some inspiration from the Marvel vs. Capcom series, as each match sees teams of three compete against one another. Expect some of the major hitters from the series to make an appearance, including Squall, Cloud, Terra, and Garland. Definitely one for fans of the series. Those who've never touched Final Fantasy before would do well to play some of the main games before exploring further.

Former BioWare Developer Trashes EA

We're all for a little EA bashing at **Pixel Juice**. The company is doing more to damage gaming than most others, and that seems to be an opinion shared by some in the industry.

Manveer Heir, a former BioWare developer who worked on the **Mass Effect** series, has taken the publisher to task for prioritising squeezing money out of gamers over delivering an experience that people may actually want to play.

When speaking about microtransactions, he said: "[EA] only care about the highest return on investment. They don't actually care about what the players want, they care

about what players will pay for. Those are subtly different things."

He went on to claim that he had heard of one player spending \$15,000 on **Mass Effect** cards. Assuming the game sold at \$60, that's 250 sales from one player.

You can see why EA would want this, but you have to wonder if less of a focus on microtransactions would lead to better games.

Could More LEGACY OF KAIN be on the Way?

Does anybody remember the **Legacy of Kain** series? For a while there, it was one of the frontrunners in video game storytelling. **Soul Reaver**, in particular, was an absolute classic that everybody should play.





ATELIER LYDIE & SUELLE: ALCHEMISTS OF THE MYSTERIOUS PAINTING

PLATFORM: SWITCH, PS4, VITA, PC

RELEASE DATE: Q1 2018

That is a very long title. Part of the long-running Atelier series, *Mysterious Paintings* is another JRPG that doesn't appear to do anything too different from standard JRPG fodder. You'll take on quests from NPCs and do battle with any number of beasties. The key here is the paintings found in the mysterious atelier. Your travels and quests will slowly unravel the secrets behind these paintings, which we reckon will be some potentially world-destroying conundrum if we know our JRPGs.

Crystal Dynamics, who now handle the development of the *Tomb Raider* series, were the people behind it. And now, the company is teasing the possibility of a new game in the series.

In a rather cryptic tweet, the company posted a picture of lead character Raziel, alongside the following quote: "I am Raziel, first-born of His lieutenants. I stood with Kain and my brethren at the dawn of the empire." We have to hope that the studio is now working on a sequel to these brilliant games. If not, this tweet just rubs salt in the wounds over the fact that we haven't seen the series in about fourteen years.

Naughty Dog Caught Up in Sexual Harassment Controversy

Now this is some bad news about one of the gaming world's leading developers. David Ballard, a former artist at Naughty

Dog, recently opened up about an alleged experience with sexual harassment with a post on Twitter. In speaking about Naughty Dog's response, he said:

"When I told them about the harassment they ended the call and fired me the next day. They cited the company was moving in a different direction and my job was no longer needed. They tried to silence me by offering \$20,000 if I signed a letter agreeing to the termination as well as to not discuss it with anyone."

Ballard says he refused the hush money, and has been unemployed for about a year and a half since the incident.

For their part, Naughty Dog has released the following statement:

"We have recently read on social media that an ex-employee of Naughty Dog, Dave Ballard, claims he was sexually harassed when he worked at Naughty Dog. We have not found any evidence of having received allegations from Mr. Ballard that he was harassed in

any way at Naughty Dog or Sony Interactive Entertainment. Harassment and inappropriate conduct have no place at Naughty Dog and Sony Interactive Entertainment. We have taken and always will take reports of sexual harassment and other workplace grievances very seriously. We value every single person who works at Naughty Dog and Sony Interactive Entertainment. It is of utmost importance to us that we maintain a safe, productive workplace environment that allows us all to channel our shared passion for making games."

It's difficult to know what to think about this. We hope that the claims are unfounded and Naughty Dog hasn't promoted a culture of sexual harassment within the company. However, we can't deny the courage that it takes to come forward with such experiences.

We can only assume that a legal case is forthcoming.



SEA OF THIEVES

PLATFORM: PC, XBOX ONE

RELEASE DATE: Q1 2018

There was a time when a new Rare game was a huge thing in gaming. Now is not that time, but that doesn't mean that *Sea of Thieves* isn't worth getting excited about. The game looks to fill the desire for pirate games that so few developers seem willing to sate. It's a big multiplayer experience, with players having the opportunity to loot villages and take on missions. They'll also meet crews of other pirates controlled by other players, which we assume means there's going to be some ship-based battling going on. There's a comedic aspect to the game, too, so think *Worms* crossed with a multiplayer *Sid Meier's Pirates*.

REVIEWS



DEVELOPER: OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT / PUBLISHER: OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT. OSX / PLATFORM: PC / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

It's a grim and very dark premise to be sure, but *Bastard's* *Wound* tries to keep this balanced out with genuine moments of hope, and the opportunity to make a real difference.

This could be forgiven quite easily, but a few bugs have the irritating habit of interfering with the questing systems. The rebel-aligned path in particular suffers from several moments where NPCs would refuse to offer the right prompts, barring you from continuing certain side-quests. In others it seemed that they fail to fully respond to certain events, as I

If you loved the original *Tyranny*'s narrative and sheer replay value, definitely pick this one up, but be ready to stomach a couple of minor flaws by the end.

★★★★★★ 7



DOCTOR WHO: THE WOMAN WHO LIVED

PUBLISHER: WARLORD GAMES / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Doctor Who has had more than its fair share of special guests over the years, and many of those could easily be part of their own spin-off show. One such example is the Woman Who Lived, played by Game of Thrones actress Maisie Williams. The character appeared on the show in multiple incarnations; first as a mortal and then

as a functionally immortal being working as a foil and counterpoint to the Doctor. Warlord Games' Woman Who Lived set features three incarnations of the same character in tiny pewter model form.

The first model is of Ashildr, a Viking girl in plain dress. It's a pretty enough model; the character looks like she's in a slight grump with her arms

crossed and the face is nicely sculpted. The pose evokes someone who is young and energetic. The second model, the Knightmare, is the highway women version of the character. The pose is fun (she's wielding a pistol) and though a domino mask obscures much of the character's face, it's easily recognisable. The final model (let's call her Me), is meant to be an older, wiser version. The clothing is more conservative, the pose more reserved. She does seem older in demeanour, rather than appearance. The models are well cast and have been sculpted with painting in mind; hobbyists will have no problems working with the pieces.

The box does not come with any cards or counters for the Doctor Who Exterminate Into the Time Vortex game. We understand that a full expansion of the rules is coming, though most gamers have been spoilt in recent years by getting everything in one box. We do question the utility of having three versions of the same character, however. The miniatures game that these pieces are a part of tends to make characters like this single champions that team up. For example, the Doctor and companions rather than

hordes (such as Cybermen). Though a horde of immortal Maisie Williams might be fun for a while, or a team-up of all three, the game requires variety and utility in most scenarios. This means you're getting to play with one model from the set of three at any one time. We'll be intrigued to see how this is handled when the rules come out. In the meantime, the models are rather lovely.

ED FORTUNE

★★★★★★★★★★ 8



METROID: SAMUS RETURNS

DEVELOPER: MERCURYSTEAM, NINTENDO EPD / PUBLISHER: NINTENDO / PLATFORM: 3DS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Samus doesn't speak, there are no minutes-long cutscenes, Adam isn't ordering your into lava zones unarmoured, and there's no mention of 'the baby' every five seconds. For anyone who suffered through Other M, consider that the short review saying that, yes, this is back to the Metroid we know and love. For everyone else, this is a remake in the best way possible.

Effectively re-envisioning the classic Game Boy release of Metroid II from the ground up, Samus Returns offers 2D gameplay of the best kind. It sticks

close to the Metroidvania format of retracing your steps, using abilities to overcome certain areas and a multitude of weapons to annihilate bosses. At the same time, however, it hasn't stopped the creators from tweaking with the formula a little. The 2.5D presentation dramatically improves the experience, freeing up the game to offer surprisingly more dynamic combat. Jumping through levels and engaging in airborne battles is far smoother an experience because of this, and it's helped by extremely

responsive controls and more than a few creative uses of Samus' equipment, such as the powerbomb boost.

The environments are as vast and sprawling as you would expect, but Samus Returns does a better job of hiding a few hidden doors and secrets. As such, even old hands of the franchise will find themselves challenged to pick out points of interest in the environment. These will not drag your progress to a screeching halt, but you might find yourself keeping a closer eye on the background.

Surprisingly, Yoshio Sakamoto's presence here definitely benefitted the game's direction. Having clearly taken a long hard look at what tanked Other M, Sakamoto focused upon more visual storytelling and badass moments while retaining the better boss-killing cutscenes that game utilised. So, you end up with moments like Samus riding dying Gamma Metroids to the ground while firing off missiles into their gullets.

The only notable flaws stem from a section towards the middle of the game where puzzle-solving and navigation seem intended to pad out the experience. It's a surprisingly long marathon before you get back to the truly fun

moments, filled only with generic mooks of a limited variety. Another issue is how the difficulty curve spikes at odd points, with the Diggernaut proving to be one of the series' most frustrating bosses thanks to a lack of checkpoints and emulating one of Echoes' most irritating battles.

There are a few problems here, but it's hardly enough to sink the game. It nevertheless still captures much of what made the classic series great. If you don't have a 3DS, this is the game which justifies buying one simply to see Samus at her best.

CALLUM SHEPHERD

★★★★★★★★★★ 8



STARBURST

BRAVE NEW WORDS

podcast



available now on

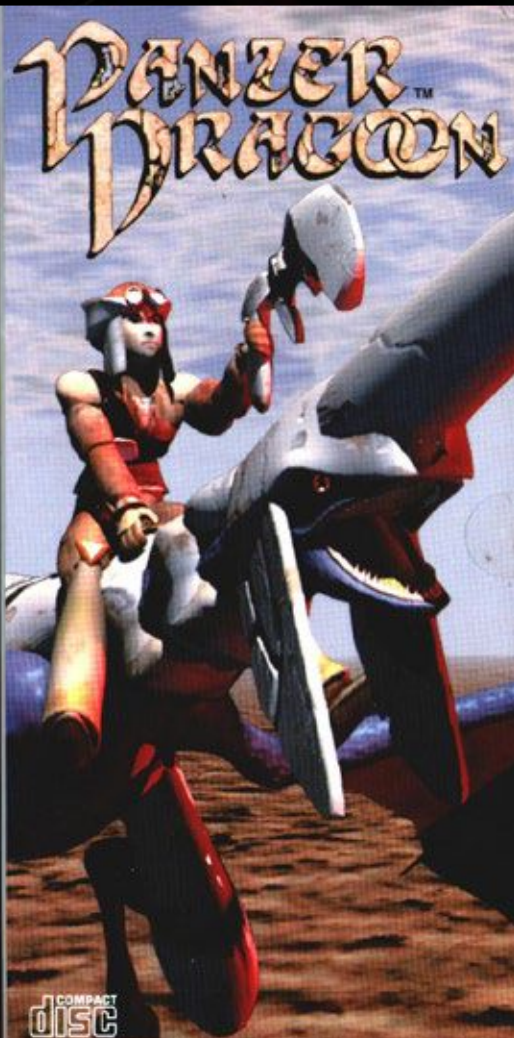
iTunes

RETRO BYTES

A LOOK BACK AT
THE WORLD OF
RETRO GAMING
WITH SEAN ONLY

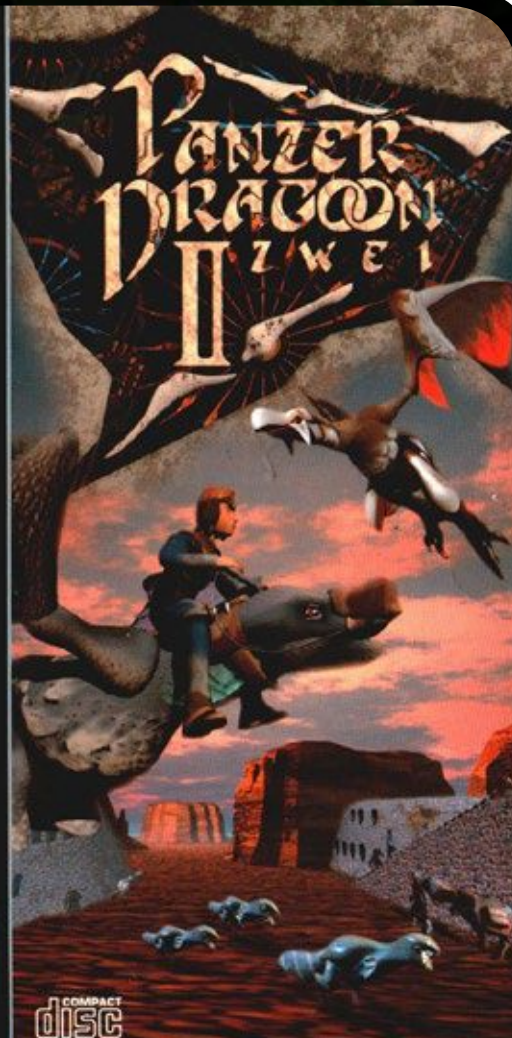
SEGA

SEGA SATURN



SEGA

SEGA SATURN



In recent years, Sega has been guilty of ignoring many of their most popular intellectual properties, much to the chagrin of some of their loyal fans. With the obvious exception of *Sonic The Hedgehog* and a couple of others, several iconic franchises such as *Alex Kidd*, *Shinobi*, *Phantasy Star*, *Golden Axe*, *Nights Into Dreams*, *Virtua Fighter* and many more have been either neglected, rejected, or completely forgotten about. Sega fanboys have seemingly given up hope on any of these once-great franchises being given a sequel or reboot. Possibly the most critically acclaimed of all of these former Sega stalwarts is the *Panzer Dragoon* franchise. All of the games from this series were incredibly well received at the time, and are still spoken of extremely positively today.

The imminent release of the Kickstarter-funded *Shenmue III* has led to new hope that perhaps the *Shenmue* universe isn't the only planned bit of Sega exhumation on the cards. We here at STARBURST think that a new

eighth-gen *Panzer Dragoon* game (or even a swanky HD remake/remaster) would go down an absolute treat, and today we're going to be taking a little retrospective look at the series as a whole.

PANZER DRAGON

The inaugural game in the series, *PD* was released exclusively on the Sega Saturn console in 1995 to huge fanfare. A launch title only in NTSC regions (confusingly, the earlier release of the Saturn in Japan, as well as the late release of this title in Europe, meant only Americans got to enjoy the game on launch), anticipation was at an all-time high as Sega seemed to be pinning a large amount of the hopes of their brand new hardware on this game.

Developed by Team Andromeda under the Sega banner, gameplay is an innovative take on the classic 'rail shooter' style mechanic. At the time, it was seen as the natural progressor to another of Sega's hits - arcade

classic *Space Harrier*. Players take control of the central protagonist (named Keil Fluge - although mysteriously unnamed in the North American version) atop a large dragon, flying through 3D environments on a predetermined track. Although the game is all on rails, the dragon can be manoeuvred around the reticle to avoid incoming enemies and projectiles. No screen-scrolling is possible with the firing reticle, but the viewpoint can be changed to forward, backwards, left or right with a simple push of a button, giving players a full 360-degree field of vision. The fully rendered 3D graphics were absolutely stunning for the time, and the Saturn's powerful hardware was really used to the best of its abilities (an all too rare occurrence for Sega's 32-bit powerhouse). The mix of orchestral and synthesised music has been highly praised and adds much to both the artistic style and general ambience of the game. Even praised by Steven Spielberg at the time, *Panzer Dragoon's* presentation really wowed people.



Sales for *PD*, while not terrible by any means, were lower than Sega was anticipating and didn't quite match the critical acclaim that was bestowed upon it. It was popular enough, however, for the nice folks over at Sega to continue the franchise...

PANZER DRAGOON ZWEI

The development team went for a quick return on *PD*'s sequel, coming out less than a year after the first game. Also exclusively released for the Saturn, Team Andromeda sought to take all the elements that people enjoyed from *Panzer Dragoon*, while also listening to both fan and critical feedback and improving or expanding on these elements. The main sources of criticism in the first instalment were lack of an immersive, in-game story and little replay value upon completing the (relatively short) game. Significant gameplay time was added to *PDZ* with the inclusion of branching paths, giving players incentive to play certain sections multiple times in order to enjoy the entire experience. The story arc and character progression were now far more prominent and fleshed out, particularly in the way your dragon evolves. The game now starts with an underdeveloped dragon without the ability to fly. As players progress, the dragon learns more skills and becomes increasingly powerful. It's actually quite difficult not to find yourself getting somewhat attached to the big, loveable fire-breathing lummo as you progress. The fact that exactly how your dragon evolves is decided by how you play the game only adds to this.

A wonderful mix of arcade fun, in-depth storytelling and immersive gameplay, *PDZ* takes what was already a winning formula and improves upon it exponentially. If we had to recommend one game from the franchise to get players into the series, it would definitely be this one.

PANZER DRAGOON SAGA

The third and final game from Sega/Team Andromeda's influential franchise for the Saturn was certainly a historical one. Released on an astounding four-disc set (to say this game is huge would be something of an understatement) in 1998, *PDS* eschewed the slightly restrictive rail shooter genre of its predecessors in favour of something far more in-depth.

Although the shooting and dragon riding are still integral to proceedings, *PDS* is a fully fledged role-playing game. Gameplay is

either on foot (a first for the *PD* franchise), traversing large areas on the back of your dragon, or doing battle. The 'rail shooter' elements have been completely abandoned, as players now have free reign of exactly where their dragon goes or where he shoots. A staple of JRPGs, the game uses a random battle system where enemies will spawn randomly as the player explores.

Often cited as not only one of the best games for the Sega Saturn, but one of the best RPGs ever made, *PDS*'s critical acclaim was almost universal, gaining it many accolades and 'game of the year' awards. However, being an extremely late release in the Saturn's lifespan meant that this acclaim didn't translate to sales. Due to the fact the Saturn was almost dead in western markets, production runs were extremely low. As a result of this, *PDS* has become one of the most valuable, collectible and sought after Saturn games today. While it may be difficult to recommend buying this game to anyone who doesn't wear a monocle, if you ever get chance to try it out, it really is a 'must play'.

PANZER DRAGOON ORTA

The final game in the series (to date, at least) and the first to be developed for sixth generation consoles, *Panzer Dragoon Orta*

was released exclusively for Microsoft's Xbox console in late 2002/early 2003. Development was handled by Smilebit (under the Sega banner), who were formed by members of Team Andromeda, which had disbanded after the previous game.

Gameplay returns to the rail shooter style of the first two main titles, and anyone that has played either of those games will feel right at home here. There have been numerous tweaks, improvements and nuances (such as the glide gauge and ability to morph between dragon classes) added to the mechanic, as one would expect, but the intense, arcade-style gameplay of the original titles is authentically replicated.

Beautifully detailed and vibrantly colourful graphics make *PDO* a real feast for the eyes. Despite being played on hardware that is three generations out of date, it still looks amazing to this day. A real testament to Andromeda's original artistic design and Smilebit's vision, there's a good argument to say *PDO* is one of the best looking entries in the entire sixth generation gaming library. Taking into account that this game is incredibly easily accessible (you can pick it up remarkably cheaply and it is forwards compatible with the Xbox 360) and it includes the original *Panzer Dragoon* as an unlockable, this has to be our most highly recommended game in this list.

THE OTHERS

Although not part of the main series, there are actually two other (rather obscure) games in the *PD* franchise. The first was released for the short-lived and ill-fated *Tiger R-Zone* in 1995. There's not really much to say about this. It's sort of impressive for a handheld LCD game, but well, it's a handheld LCD game. The second (*Panzer Dragoon Mini*) was released only in Japan, exclusively for the Sega Game Gear in 1996. An extremely stripped down version of the original two games, this plays more like a dragon sprite was pasted onto an 8-bit handheld version of *Space Harrier* or *Afterburner*. And it's about as unpleasant as that description suggests.

All in all, we'd say it's probably best to ignore the handheld versions, but if you're not familiar with (or haven't played much of) the main series, we think it's high time to give yourself a *Panzer Dragoon* education and enjoy a true piece of gaming history.



ROLL FOR DAMAGE

ED FORTUNE
GUIDES YOU THROUGH
THE REALM OF
TABLE TOP GAMING



souls) and a long and storied history. Despite being former servants of humanity, they're pretty neutral as a race; they have long memories, though, so trust with humans isn't a given. Operatives are the stealth class and so far the stories involving Iseph seem to involve cunning and Solid Snake-style badass behaviour. Quig is a ysoki mechanic; basically a rat-like scrounger who spends most of his time under an engine.

Or to put it another way: this is sort of *Mass Effect* meets *The Lord of The Rings*. Or *Farscape* meets *Game of Thrones*. But with more obvious magic, dark, and peckish gods opposed by the more amenable sort of deities and everyone who's anyone can get their hands on some sort of cool-looking energy weapon. That said, rifles are pretty much a must in *Starfinder*. Magic is a thing, and magic exists as a power people use. But people also use magic to enchant their plasma rifles and rocket launchers. Why just own a hover car when you can have a hover car magically enchanted to phase through traffic?

It's also part of the same 'world' as *Pathfinder*. Sort of. It's the far future, and the world that *Pathfinder* is set in, Golarion, is missing. Also, there's a huge chunk of history that's missing. The Gap (as it's called) is a centuries-long period of history that no one remembers and there are no records of. You can see why (from a storytelling point of view) they've done this, but it's a fun mystery for players to investigate. I suspect the default reason for the Gap is that some sort of space-god thingy did it and ran away, but the setting is so wild and weird that pretty much the sky's the limit.

Another interesting defining feature is the Drift. This is *Starfinder*'s version of Warp/Hyperspace. Basically, to go to another system you pop into the Drift, travel for a few weeks and then pop back into 'real' space. The only alternative is really powerful magic (which is rare), but Drift Engines are pretty common. Another cool wrinkle is that there is no 'sub-space communications'.

Pathfinder is a table top gaming franchise that seems set on conquering the known worlds of fantasy. Pretty much every imaginable form of media is available in the shape of a *Pathfinder* story, from books, comics, magazines to, of course, the roleplaying game. So it's perhaps not a surprise that the owners of the franchise, Paizo, has turned their eyes skywards. *Pathfinder* may be set to conquer the world, but the sci-fi sequel, *Starfinder*, may well conquer the stars.

Translating popular fantasy RPGs into a sci-fi setting is not a new thing. *Dungeons and Dragons* has done it in several ways, from the classic *Expedition to Barrier Peaks* (fantasy dungeon crawlers find a downed starship) to *Spelljammer* (swashbuckling adventures with wooden spaceships and magical flintlocks). *Starfinder*, however, is a different sort of hybrid. It's a heady blend of **D&D** clichés and tropey science fiction oddness that mixes high adventure with sci-fi pulp.

The crunchy heart of the *Pathfinder* table top roleplaying game has been smoothed and made easier to manage. It's still a 'Roll 1d20, apply modifiers'-style system, familiar to fantasy gamers across the world, and wears a familiar cloak of in-depth rules and high-quality art. But it's as far removed from *Pathfinder* as the Earth is from the stars. The 521-page rulebook is a tour-de-force of sci-fi space opera fun. It's worth noting that there are rules in the back for converting a pile of the *Pathfinder* setting into *Starfinder*. And yes, if you really want to, you can play Half-Orcs, Elves, Dwarves and so on in this game. But you will note that all of that is tucked neatly in the back of the book, and none of that is the focus of the setting.

A good way to describe the setting is

to look at the game's signature characters. These are basically NPCs that will appear in the game's art and setting. In a way, they are an example of play; these are the sort of stories the game's designers intend to tell with *Starfinder*, and players being players, they'll likely exceed these archetypes. So, for example, we have the samurai-like Obozaya - a huge lizard-like creature that carries a jet-powered club and flies a banner (powered by a holo-projector) on her back. Keskodai is a freaky insect/praying mantis thingy who follows a death god called the Lady of Graves. He's a happy-go-lucky priest who wields a high-tech quarter staff. Navasi is a human starship captain who is basically Dan Dare meets Kirk. Her character class is Envoy; basically, the blaggers, con artists and starship captains. Iseph is an android operative. Androids are their own race and culture in this setting. They have souls (and can be affected by technology and magic that hurts





STAR TREK
ADVENTURES

MODIPHIOUS
ENTERTAINMENT



STARTREK.COM

™ & © 2017 CBS Studios Inc. All Rights Reserved.

MODIPHIOUS.COM/STAR-TREK

So if you're in one system and you need to get a message to another system, you need to get something to travel to that system and deliver that message. So you get 'Pony Expresses' in space; which again is clearly worked out to make for interesting storytelling and fun.

Golarion's influence is still about. In the place of the missing planet is a space station called Absalom Station, which is the heart of the Golarion System. It's a crowded bit of space, featuring most of the Pact Worlds, a confederation of friendly species. The Pact serves as a backdrop for the game, a place to throw the players at the start of a story. Not all PCs come from Pact Worlds, but that's all to the good. Other factions include the ruthless Azlanti Empire (bloodthirsty humans), the Android Abolitionist Front, the Free Captains (space pirates) and AbadarCorp (a hyper-corporation ran by the god of greed). So far, I've found AbadarCorp to be the most fun; evil corporate priests who literally worship greed and have access to all sorts of weapons tech - how can that not be fun?

Rules-wise, *Starfinder* is a significant step up from *Pathfinder*. Character creation is point-based, making for a more flexible game where players get to control characters they actually want to play. And to be blunt: no one makes players roll dice for character stats in 2017. The rules let you create viable and not too weak or too overpowered starting-level characters. Combat is smoother and hit points have been redesigned to be more about drama and fun; it's totally possible to get your character killed, but it's easier to manage risk. Players know when combat's getting serious and when the stakes are being raised. This is more fun than simply running into a brick wall of death halfway through an evening's play. Combat is both more tactical and less crunchy, with less faff for actions. Oh, and your character's gear also levels as you play. So your grandfather's ancient laser pistol that forms part of your backstory doesn't get discarded as soon as the character finds

something cooler. Space combat is a bit tedious, however. The rules try to be both narrative spaceship combat and an actual space combat game. Best choice is to dump the latter in favour of the former, otherwise it gets too clunky.

Of course, maybe space fantasy isn't your thing. Maybe science fiction with a touch of utopia is more your cup of tea. In which case, you may be intrigued to learn that there is a new *Star Trek* roleplaying game out, thanks to those fine people at Modiphius.

We've talked about *Star Trek* RPGs in these pages in the past before, and they've never quite fulfilled their promise. The FASA game broke new ground by inventing a version of the Klingon language but, alas, was way too complicated to be fun and the *Decipher* game simply lacked flexibility to work well (and was mostly inspired by *Star Trek: The Next Generation*). *Star Trek Adventures* covers *The Original Series* all the way through to *Enterprise* (the reboot movies and *Star Trek Discovery* aren't covered in the core book). The game defaults to 'round about DS9' as the setting. As in, the events of *The Next Generation* are just about wrapping up and *Voyager* hasn't gotten lost yet. There are plenty of rules to run vintage *Starfleet*, however, and you can even upgrade various *Starfleet* ships to your heart's content, letting you (in theory) run any version of the *Enterprise* you fancy. The ship is pretty much treated like a character, with its crew and departments functioning like skills and attributes on a player character. They can be modified and refitted depending on the mission, of course.

Character creation is rather clever. Skills and abilities don't change too much over the course of a campaign, but the character's story and role on the ship can. Worf, for example, doesn't get any stronger but his rank, privilege and so on change as his adventures grow. Likewise, during character creation you don't get extra rules for being a Vulcan; it just modifies the way the world affects you. Spock, for example, doesn't look that strong but really is (and his stats reflect this) and, of course, Earth leeches aren't

interested in his copper blood. The character's actual knowledge and skills are well defined, but any element in which rules can beat the story has been tailored so it always favours a *Star Trek*-style tale, rather than an exercise in crunching numbers. There's also a 'lifepath' system to help you flesh out your backstory.

Rules wise, it's Modiphius' 2D20 system. Add your attribute to your discipline (skill), roll two dice. Get equal or greater to that number, score a success. The more successes the better. There are ways to get more successes as well. Momentum lets you 'bank' successes in one particular scene, meaning the more competent or heroic you are, the more likely things go your way. Threat is a mechanic that lets the Games-Master or Storyteller 'cheat' by giving the players a pool of successes to use later (so, for example, to have Khan not die in a particular scene, the Storyteller just increases the threat) and Determination are limited 'free' successes the character can spend when they're in great need. All of which means that when the chips are down and all looks lost (and the bad guys look like they're going to win), your party of *Star Trek* heroes can knuckle down and pull a victory from the jaws of defeat. Probably. Just like the show.

Unlike *Starfinder*, which is wild, messy and rooted in fantasy, *Star Trek Adventures* is well codified in its intention and set-up. It's perfect for telling *Star Trek* stories of any ilk, though you may want to wait for the supplements before you delve too deeply into Klingons, Vulcans, and Romulans. They are two very different sci-fi games, but both look set to be classics.

Ed Fortune is currently putting together a *Star Wars* RPG table top campaign and is finding the *Force and Destiny* rules rather fun. He's spent way too much time statting the bad guys, which means they're going to get ignored by the players. You can find him on twitter @ed_fortune or via email ed.fortune@starburstmagazine.com.

WATTO'S EMPORIUM

STUFF WE LIKED FROM
AROUND THE WEB
THIS MONTH WITH
JACK BOTTOMLEY



STAR
WARS
The Force Awakens
yiii!



Store Wars Strikes Back

As you may be aware there is a new **Star Wars** film coming in December, it has not been very well publicised, mind. Yes, as the release date approaches it is time to celebrate the ultimate gift once bestowed by a bearded chap - no not Santa, George Lucas (read our Lucas piece on pages 36, where we thank the maker)! **Star Wars** is 40 years old (young in Hutt years) and to celebrate, not only did we compile this **The Last Jedi**-centric issue, but we scoured the Internet in less than twelve parsecs and found lots of neat **Star Wars** goodies that may be useful for that aforementioned festive season, which is approaching faster

than a pod racer on nitrous.

First up, for all those well-informed **Star Wars** fans who drool over the science of this galaxy far, far away, we have this match made in geek heaven. This shirt from reslick.com takes the periodic table and gives it a Galactic twist, integrating some of the core characters, planets, and vehicles into the table, resulting in a well-thought-out piece of attire. There were some newer pieces of merchandise available and one that caught our eye was this shirt from vshirty.com, which shows off Supreme Leader Snoke (the scarred mysterious antagonist set to make his flesh and bone debut in **The Last Jedi**, after appearing as a hologram only in **The Force Awakens**) alongside his red coated and stylish Praetorian Guards... wow, he really is the sequel trilogy's answer to Sidious, isn't he?

Also in our pick of the merch mix, we were very impressed with this Chewbacca-themed reversible hoodie, available from bluebanana.com. After all, winter is coming (sorry, wrong franchise) and what better way to prepare for it than by adding a bit of Wookiee hair to your back and front (note: this item is not made from real Wookiee pelt). And staying with this hairy theme, we

were also very taken with this Ewok Loop Scarf, which is an exclusive from emp.co.uk and looks absolutely fab. Just don't wear this around any Imperial bases, they haven't yet got over that little skirmish on Endor; c'mon guys, it was back in 4 ABY, let it go! Speaking of history, Ron Howard's announcement that his Han Solo spin-off (looking at the smuggler's younger years) next year will be called **Solo: A Star Wars Story** (we were hoping for 'Scruffy Lookin' Nerf Herder: A **Star Wars** Story' personally) got us thinking of the memories with ol' Han and how we used to want to be him. Well, with this hyper-realistic upper body attire from kidits.co.uk, we can be, to a degree anyway.

Then on a more lavish level, we happened across a dream made real in the **Star Wars: Jedi Challenges Augmented Reality Headset** from currys.co.uk, which looks incredible, allowing you to immerse yourself in battle strategy and lightsaber dueling. This item, whether great or flawed, is a realisation of many a fan's dream and proof that **Star Wars** merch continues to get ever closer to our youthful imaginings. Hell, with this android-assisted VR Game device, you can even play a game of Dejarik! Awesome!





STAR WARS PERIODIC TABLE SHIRT -
£16.95 - £22.95 (SIZE DEPENDANT)
AVAILABLE AT RESLICK.COM

STAR WARS SNOKE PRAETORIAN
GUARDS SHIRT - £16.95 - £18.95 (SIZE
DEPENDANT)
AVAILABLE AT VSHIRT.VCOM

STAR WARS CHEWBACCA REVERSIBLE
HOODIE - £124.99
AVAILABLE AT BLUEBANANA.COM

STAR WARS EWOK LOOP SCARF - £17.99
AVAILABLE AT EMP.CO.UK

STAR WARS HAN SOLO SHIRT YIIJA -
£15.59
AVAILABLE AT KIDITS.CO.UK

STAR WARS: JEDI CHALLENGES
AUGMENTED REALITY HEADSET - £249.99
AVAILABLE AT CURRYS.CO.UK

Porging Out!

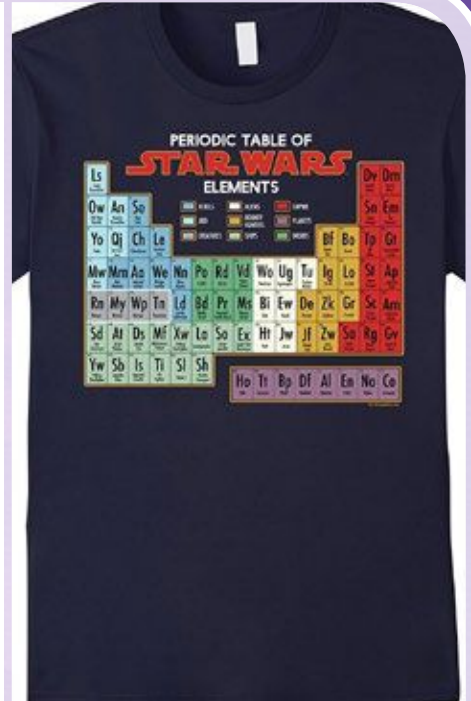
Earlier we mentioned Ewoks and



throughout **Star Wars** lore there have always been attempts at giving us cute and comic creations to balance out the tones of the - sometimes rather dark - adventures. Some have been more successful than others (see: Jar Jar) but in *The Last Jedi*, the sea bird-like Porgs have already struck at the hearts of fans and in the latest (and absolutely incredible) trailer, we got to hear what they sound like. Well, over at **merchoid.com**, you can fuel your Porg obsession ahead of the latest film by pre-ordering one of these neat Porg-filled T-shirts. However, should you wish to go even further than that, you can purchase your very own talking Porg from **forbiddenplanet.com** in what is a surefire Christmas list topper!

TROUBLE WITH PORGS SHIRT (PRE-ORDER: SHIPPING DECEMBER 20TH) -
£22.99
AVAILABLE AT MERCHOID.COM

TALKING PLUSH PORC - £10.99
AVAILABLE AT FORBIDDENPLANET.COM

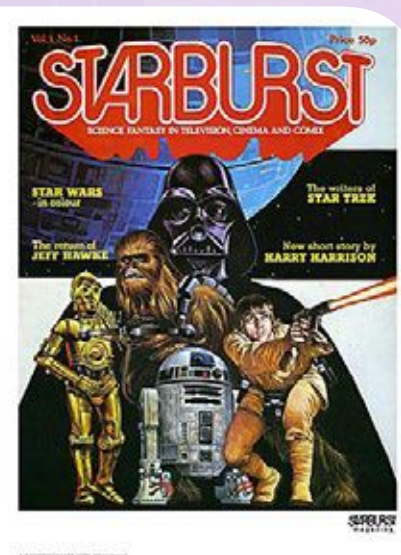


Star(Burst) Wars

Well, we have made very clear our **Star Wars** excitement, but as the series hits that 40-year milestone so too do we, and over at **merchoid.com**, we were very surprised and flattered to find this collector's artwork of the very first issue of **STARBURST** and its vintage **Star Wars** cover. Back from we were but an infant magazine destined to bring order to the publishing galaxy (well, that's how we like to tell the story anyway), this was a find online that gave us a dewy eyed rush of nostalgia.

And, if this writer can be allowed to speak honestly, life is incredibly rough, tough and occasionally dreadful but it is great to feel that your work has merit or value (even when you doubt it) and to be reminded of the historical publication that you have been allowed to be a part of gives one that very feeling. Here's to another 40 years!

STAR WARS: STARBURST ISSUE 1 1978
LIMITED EDITION COLLECTOR'S ARTWORK -
£19.99
AVAILABLE AT MERCHOID.COM



JAWS: IN CONCERT

The Royal Albert Hall, London
OCTOBER 21st - 22nd, 2017



WORDS: ANDREW BYRON

The Royal Albert Hall is gaining an extraordinary reputation for presenting some of STARBURST's favourite films, but with the luxury of having a live concert orchestra. Previous productions have included *Aliens*, *Harry Potter*, *Interstellar*, and *Independence Day*, our latest voyage brought us to director Steven Spielberg and composer John Williams' 1975 thriller *Jaws* - the first time the film has been performed with a live orchestra. During this performance, three pieces of music written by John Williams and ultimately excised from the finished product were reinstated and restored to the movie with the permission of both Spielberg and the composer.

Many argue that *Jaws* was the first modern blockbuster, but what is undeniable is that John Williams' Academy Award-winning score is not only iconic, but still stands the test of time; it unnerved fellow audience members every time a dorsal fin appeared and the spine-tingling string section came to life to the exhilarating dynamics of the menacing theme. At one point during the evening, this reviewer could have thought he was in a 4D version of the film as what felt like a splash of sea water hit the back of his neck during an unexpected forte motif, which was actually a lady sat behind him with an empty glass that had been holding a gin and tonic.

Credit must be given to the BBC Concert Orchestra under the baton of Dirk Brossé. It should go without saying, but it doesn't matter how many thousands of pounds you might pay for the latest sound system at home, there is no better way to appreciate a film score played by the majestic BBC Concert Orchestra than in the magical acoustics of the Royal Albert Hall.

This writer hadn't watched *Jaws* for quite some time and like many others, the film is the reason I never tread too far out into sea when on holiday. But I had forgotten what a masterpiece it is, whether that be the brave direction and ground-breaking camera work by Spielberg or the perfectly judged humour and relationships between Hooper, Brody, and Quint. It's a film that haunted my childhood and this production delighted me in my now adult years.

Don't go into water. Instead, head to the Royal Albert Hall box office and book for any of their upcoming films-with-live-orchestra experiences. We promise whatever you book for, you'll 'smile you son of a bitch'.

Check out the latest special event listings at royalalberthall.com.



DAVID HASSELHOFF
KNIGHT RIDER

DOLPH LUNDGREN
HE-MAN/ROCKY IV

WILLIAM SHATNER
STAR TREK

ERNIE HUDSON
GHOSTBUSTERS/THE CROW

BILLY DEE WILLIAMS
STAR WARS/BATMAN

CASPER VAN DIEN
STARSHIP TROOPERS

JOONAS SUOTAMO
STAR WARS

DAVE PROWSE
STAR WARS

JEREMY BULLOCH
STAR WARS/DR WHO

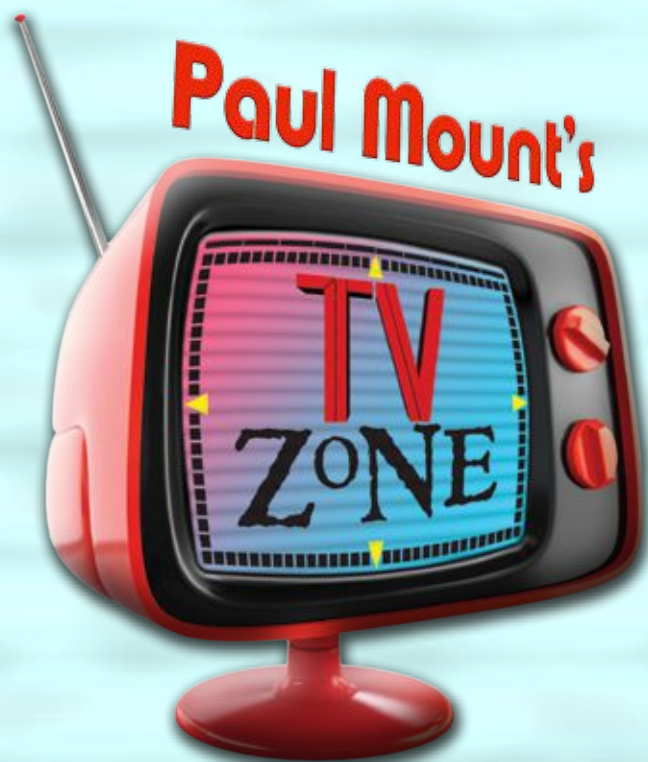
KEN COLLEY
STAR WARS/LIFE OF BRIAN



FOR THE LOVE OF SCI-FI

2ND-3RD DECEMBER 2017

BEC ARENA, TRAFFORD PARK, MANCHESTER, LONGBRIDGE RD, M17 1SN
TICKETS & INFO FORTHELOVEOFSCI-FI.COM



This month, we're shocked by PHILIP K. DICK'S **ELECTRIC DREAMS**, up to our eyeballs with mutants in **THE GIFTED** and **THE INHUMANS** and feeling cold outside with **RED DWARF 436** (although it might actually be 12)...

I do love a good anthology series. There's something inherently, irresistibly thrilling about settling down to watch a short, imaginative - possibly with a sting in the tail - dramatised short story that doesn't require you to invest in the lives of its characters across six seasons. The best anthology series have snappy, punchy stories to tell, specific moments in the lives of their characters that we're invited to witness, because this is the time in which the story happens and that's all we need to know about the lives and sometimes

loves of the *dramatis personae* involved. TV has a rich heritage of anthology shows too; my own personal timeline includes groundbreaking stone cold classics like Rod Serling's **The Twilight Zone** (psychological) and **The Outer Limits** (bug-eyed monsters ahoy... I'll just say *Zanti Misfits* and leave it there) alongside the likes of **Journey to the Unknown**, **Hammer House of Horror**, **Roald Dahl's Tales of the Exceedingly Obvious** [oh, you wag - Ed] and undoubtedly loads of others that have slipped through the cracks in my memory. Of course, the gold

standard for modern anthology TV is Charlie Brooker's transcendent **Black Mirror** (new episodes imminent!) in which Britain's most perceptive and acerbic cultural commentator crafts fascinating parables designed to make us wonder if the massive strides in technology, which seem to make living in the 21st century increasingly bewildering, are necessarily in the best interests of the human condition. **Black Mirror** migrated over to Netflix a couple of years ago when the UK's Channel Four presumably decided it didn't sit comfortably alongside their diet of lifestyle and makeover shows. But having scored something of a hit with the first series of the home-grown AI thriller **Humans**, C4 seemed to reconsider that perhaps there might be something in this sci-fi malarkey after all and entered into a production deal with AMC in the States (who subsequently pulled out) for a ten-part anthology series produced by Sony Pictures Television with luminaries such as Ronald D Moore and Bryan Cranston serving as executive producers. **Philip K. Dick's Electric Dreams** has just run its first six episodes in the UK (four more are due next year) and, as ever with anthology shows, they're a bit of a mixed bag. Dick's work is famously concerned with glowering corporate omnipotence, alternative timelines, skewed states of consciousness, totalitarianism and the old standby 'what it means to be human'; in short, the stuff of proper sci-fi. But where, for example, Charlie Brooker wraps interesting stories around intriguing concepts with genuinely clever twists and character beats, Dick's tales are a little stodgier and more opaque. Bearing in mind that Dick's best-known work is probably **Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?** (aka **Blade Runner**), I had a sneaking suspicion that **Electric Dreams** might not quite suit my palate. You see... deep breath... I've never quite connected with **Blade Runner** and whilst I appreciate that the recent sequel is clearly a bit of legitimate hard science fiction, a masterpiece, a work of art etc., it's a world and a story that leaves me pretty cold and uninvolved. That's just the way it is sometimes and sad to say **Electric Dreams**,



ELECTRIC DREAMS

THE GIFTED



by and large, had much the same effect upon me.

It didn't help the show's cause that it kicked off with two stupefyingly dull and uninvolved tales that looked distinctly cash-strapped and - fatally - failed to deliver dramatically upon whatever potential might have lay hidden in their narratives. Series opener *The Hood Maker* (written by Matthew 'Life on Mars/Doctor Who' Graham) presumably kicked off the run because of its clear lineage with *Blade Runner* (the sequel having just appeared on cinema screens) but was a turgid and lifeless affair clumsily dealing with issues of discrimination and segregation involving 'Teeps', telepathic humans shunned and mistrusted by society. A grey and listless affair, *The Hood Maker* was devoid of energy or dramatic imperative and just fizzled out after forty-odd minutes of dystopian dreariness. *The Impossible Planet* appeared to be a better bet and yet it too failed to properly resolve its conceit and offered up some half-hearted CGI and a spaceship interior that looked as if it had been knocked together from some old dustbins. *Electric Dreams* perked up somewhat with Jack Thorne's *The Commuter*, starring the peerless Timothy Spall as a railway worker at Woking Station who finds himself lured to a destination called Macon Heights, which doesn't appear on any timetable or map and that, by rights, doesn't exist. Macon Heights offers him a Utopic existence away from the worries of his grey, domestic life... but it comes at a cost. *The Commuter* is a snappy, engrossing tale, which works because it doesn't encumber itself with the sci-fi trappings that bog down the rest of the series; it's akin to a classic *Twilight Zone* tale and all the better for it. The remaining episodes, however, despite finally showing where the money went and boasting some impressive guest stars - Steve Buscemi, Julia Davis, Anna Paquin, and Bryan Cranston - just shared the same gloomy, downbeat tone and soul-sapping visual aesthetic. Dick's obsessions just become wearing and repetitive viewed week after week and by the end of *Human Is*, I was pretty much glad to see the back of the series.

The lack of real variety - particularly narratively - is probably what did for *Electric*

Dreams in the end. Whereas Brooker's stories, for example, seem to have a broader, richer canvas to work on, Dick's tales just plough the same doomy furrow and, to be honest, six weeks of grim, largely humourless dystopian misery is six weeks too much for me at the moment. Deeply disappointing.

THE GIFTED/INHUMANS

Hooray! If there's one thing genre TV is crying out for at the moment, it's yet more series about bloody mutants with extraordinary abilities, more angsty American teenagers who can fling things around with their minds or create wibbly wobbly spatial portals, and more government agencies tracking down and terrorising these poor unfortunate freak shows. Seriously, how many more *X-Men*-lite shows do we need? There's *Heroes*, *Alphas*, *No Ordinary Family*, *Sense8*, *The Tomorrow People* reboot (one of the great

wasted opportunities of recent TV memory) alongside *Legion* from earlier this year and *Marvel's Runaways* due to debut any day now and umpteen others. This month, we've two new titles to consider and mercifully at least one of them is worth sticking with in the short-term whilst the second can be dismissed as a massive, monstrous Marvel misfire of... well, superhuman proportions.

The Gifted (Fox) is decent enough, if fairly unexceptional. In a series that makes much of its connection to the *X-Men* (and yet suggests that it's set in alternative timeline so... err... why bother?), Stephen (True Blood) Moyer and Amy (Angel) Acker play the separated parents of a couple of teens who harbour special powers - which ain't good news as those with the so-called 'X-gene' are routinely persecuted and hounded by the government. The family are forced to go on the run when the kids' secret is revealed but, fortunately, there's a secret mutant underground cabal (not entirely like



INHUMANS

RED DWARF



the recent *Tomorrow People* incarnation) dedicated to offering protection and sanctuary to those who would otherwise be locked up and prosecuted by the fearful authorities. There's nothing much wrong with *The Gifted*, it barrels along at a fair old clip; *X-Men* fans will undoubtedly shiver at the frequent references to both the classic team and the Brotherhood, and the show is dotted with little fan-pleasing Easter eggs and call backs to obscure comic book

characters; yet it can't help feeling a bit 'seen all this before' as the 'teen mutant' thing has been done to death in the last few years; TV continues to crawl all over the *X-Men/Marvel* bandwagon with increasingly diminishing returns. But a gutsy storyline and energetic cast performances from the youngsters and especially Moyer and Acker makes *The Gifted* a more agreeable proposition than many of its ilk and, at just ten episodes in its first season, it doesn't appear to be inclined to drag its heels and won't wear out its welcome or waste our time with flabby filler.

Inhumans, however, is an entirely different kettle of catastrophe. Word of mouth was subterranean on this one way before it finally debuted and sadly, on the basis of the extended first episode (I'm unlikely to waste much more of my time on subsequent instalments), was pretty much on the money. My Marvel Comics days are long behind me but I have vague memories of the comic book characters from their appearances in early issues of *The Fantastic Four* before spinning off into their own short-run comic series in the early 1970s. Created by and illustrated by the legendary Jack Kirby, the Inhuman Royal Family were a striking race of superhumans in possession of... yes, you guessed it... extraordinary abilities. But the Inhumans, like many of Kirby's creations, weren't your friendly neighbourhood superhero types; they were tough, angular, striking, and distinctly... well, inhuman. Black Bolt, Medusa, Karnak, Crystal, Lockjaw the giant teleporting dog; these are all characters clearly too big and broad and wild for the screen. A mooted MCU feature film stumbled so the project found its way to ABC as an eight-part TV series that has now arrived and been met, inevitably, with near-Universal hoots of derision. But the show's failure isn't just a self-fulfilling prophecy or even wish fulfilment; it genuinely is terrible. It's not just that the story, the characters and their background are just too outlandish even for a Marvel-savvy audience, it's more that the production is so clunky and half-hearted, the story muddled and uninteresting, the acting so self-conscious, the FX rarely better than bargain basement. Iwan Rheon (*Misfits*, *Game of Thrones*) seems like an odd choice

to play Black Bolt's frustrated brother Maximus and yet despite his curious accent, he at least seems to be making a bit of an effort in his portrayal of a 'bad guy' who actually has a bit more light and shade than the more traditional black-hatted baddy. But he's not enough to keep afloat a TV ship that was sinking even as it hit the water. *Inhumans* is absurd, tacky, unconvincing stuff and it's only right and proper for the sake of everyone concerned with this misbegotten effort that we draw a discrete veil across it and never mention it again.

RED DWARF 12

I like a laff and I've come to really like *Red Dwarf*, which is clearly now destined to outlive us all. Series Twelve, sitting on the shelf since production finished early last year, has finally arrived on the show's new home (Dave) and, as ever, it's a mixed bag of great gags, outstanding visuals (the show has really upped its game now that Dave is showing more confidence in it) and frustratingly lame resolutions. It's tempting to just cut-and-paste critique of *Red Dwarf* now it's been around so long but this twelfth series has, so far, largely kept up its recent quality surge and is starting to resemble the show in its Series Four to Six BBC2 prime. The stories are based around solid, if familiar, sci-fi concepts, the cast hurl themselves into it with the enthusiasm you'd expect of four great friends dressing up and playing *spaceships* for a few weeks every year, and the visual FX really are state of the art. As ever, many gags fall flat, others soar. If there's a real complaint, then it's that there's a tendency to rush to the conclusion of the story with a flip, glib ending, but ultimately *Red Dwarf* is a comedy show and, by and large, writer Doug Naylor is still servicing his creation with clever stories and witty (occasionally corny) gags in a show which is now the TV equivalent of a comfy pair of reliable old slippers. Here's to Series Twelve and beyond...

Email me at paul.mount@starburstmagazine.com or do the Twitter thang @PMount. Catch up with the latest news, reviews, gossip and general geek idiocy in the brand new TV Zone Plus podcast on iTunes.

ALSO SCREENING



THE PUNISHER

More Marvel madness as Jon Bernthal returns as psychotic killer Frank Castle, last seen kicking up a storm in the second season of *Daredevil*.
Netflix from November 17th

THE ORVILLE

Seth McFarlane's 'comic' homage to the voyages of the USS Enterprise makes its UK debut. More *Star Trek* than *Star Trek*, frankly.
Fox from December 14th

DIRK GENTLY'S HOLISTIC DETECTIVE AGENCY

Douglas Adams's lesser-known creation returns for his second quirky US season.
Netflix early December

it's only a movie

I knew that this 40th anniversary issue was going to be somewhat of a challenge to put together, so I managed to fit in a trip over to the US, to my second home - Las Vegas. What was intended to be a break from all of this craziness quickly turned into **The STARBURST Vacation** (Cert 21).

The flight over coincided with the release of **Blade Runner 2049**. The original **Blade Runner** was my coming of age movie. I was drifting slightly away from sci-fi and horror movies as I had entered those pesky teenage years. John Brosnan was almost evangelical about the film in his STARBURST review, and in this very column. John was bang on the money. **Blade Runner** was way ahead of its time, ushering in an era of filmmaking where a matte painting background was no longer enough to create a world. Los Angeles of 2019 was a living, breathing entity. It was the real star of the movie, and modern filmmaking quickly upped its game. The film was a box office bomb and yet one of the biggest cult movies of all time. It was the film that dragged me back, and showed me that genre movies had plenty to contribute to my impending adulthood.

Blade Runner may well be one of my top three movies of all time, yet I was never keen on the idea of a sequel. I never read the 'authorised' sequel by K. W. Jeter, **Blade Runner 2: The Edge of Human**. I also never read **Blade Runner 3: Replicant Night** or **Blade Runner 4: Eye and Talon**. Partly because 'authorised' means bugger all when later an actual movie continuation emerges, as they just write something that totally ignores *anything* other than the original movie. **Star Wars** fans just got burned big time on that one! Mostly, I was concerned that any sequel would try to answer the unicorn conundrum. The one that still has poor old Riddlers so worked up when anyone suggests that maybe the original works better with Deckard still being human. My thoughts on this later...

I managed to catch **Blade Runner 2049** in a format we do not have in the UK. In the US, Cinemark Cinemas has something called **Cinema XD**. This was as good a time as any to give it a go. What is Cinema XD? Pretty freakin' awesome, to be fair. A LOUD sound system, perfectly mixed, with a gorgeous curved screen based upon the French cinemas of the '60s. **Blade Runner 2049** looked absolutely absorbing in this format. I am gutted we do not have it in the UK. Forget IMAX, Cinema XD is an incredible moviegoing experience.

Blade Runner 2049 delivered everything I could have hoped, and much more. It perfectly



Best head out into the Nevada Desert if you want to bag any quality furture.

satisfies my criteria for a sequel. It continues the themes of the original, whilst bringing new, expansionist ideas to bear, without damaging the original movie. In fact, **BR 2049** manages to tell a much bigger story, whilst feeding the original examination of what constitutes life, and whether an artificial lifeform can ever achieve humanity. I was already very on board with the talents of director Denis Villeneuve. **Arrival** was hands down my favourite movie of 2016 - good, intelligent, genuine hard sci-fi. Villeneuve takes those talents and hones them close to genius levels with this latest opus. This story of the first union between human and replicant to produce a child is big enough to carry this lengthy and very serious narrative. Ryan Gosling was a revelation as 'K', a replicant that stumbles across the existence of a child who threatens to disrupt the world order. Gosling gives a subtle and layered performance as he masks his vulnerable side to cope with the prejudice he constantly endures, when, in fact, he just seeks romance with his holographic companion Joi, and some answers to his implanted memories that may be so much more. The trailers lured us in with the promise of Harrison Ford reprising his iconic role as Deckard. It is a testament that he does not appear until the last act, but by then you were so engaged you had almost forgotten about him. Ford also delivers the goods. This is a world-weary Deckard, mourning his lost love, and wanting to live out his days in an abandoned Las Vegas hotel.

The cinematography of Roger Deakins equals the award-winning work of the sublime Jordan Cronenweth. That is probably the greatest praise you could ever lavish upon

someone. Again, we are immersed in a living, breathing city. It's a mesmerising film. Truly beautiful. You just get swept along with the visuals. You couldn't possibly exaggerate how stunningly realistic everything looks. A style that blends seamlessly with the aesthetic of the original **Blade Runner**, creating another delicious blend of noir and sci-fi. I am so relieved it turned out this well.

Sean Young called upon *everyone* to boycott **BR 2049**, but as we are all more than aware she is a booze-addled, party-crashing mentalist, we pretty much ignored her. There may be no Sean Young, but we do get a cameo from Rachael. Now I may be alone in thinking Peter Cushing in **Star Wars: Rogue One** more resembled one of the creatures from his Frankenstein gigs than a faithful CGI recreation of the man himself, but in **BR 2049**, we get the real deal. It was only a minute, but the recreation of Rachael as she was thirty years ago made me actually gasp. I guess it can be done after all. Ford really delivered the goods in this moment. "*Her eyes were green!*" was a subtle, yet heartbreaking announcement that there would only ever be one Rachael, and anything else was a poor substitute. Overall, a great film, and a fantastic follow-up to a seminal sci-fi classic. Upon leaving the cinema, it took me the best part of an hour to shake off the 'feel' of the world that Villeneuve and Deakins had immersed me in. As for the *unicorn question*, isn't it a far bigger story if this is the story of a procreation between a *human* and a replicant? Oh dear, Riddlers has filled his colostomy bag again!

After my mind returned to the real world of



At last, a genuine survival horror experience. Kris was a little terrified of the three zombies outside though!

Nevada, Kris Heys met up with me later in the week. He had multiple issues with a local legend - **The Clown Motel**, a bizarre, run-down motel at Tonopah, at the edge of Vegas. This was a scary place to stay (we didn't), run by a strange 70-something man who Kris insisted should have made the effort to don a clown costume (including those crazy big shoes). The reception had lots of weird souvenirs on sale, and there was a board for customers to put their pictures on that was populated with strange snapshots taken decades ago. It resembled a missing persons board from 1975 (seriously, everyone had flares and bowl haircuts). Just in case this wasn't fucked up enough, directly at the side of the motel was a graveyard, and if you wanted some old motel chairs you were in luck, a sinister sign informed you that there was "FUTURE FOR SALE". This place was a gift for an indie horror director. We made a hasty retreat back to civilisation and spent the next few days hitting a few Tiki bars before we hit Downtown Vegas for the **Fear the Walking Dead Survival Experience**...

Regular readers know of my obsession with live interactive horror experiences. Recently, I was horrified for all the wrong reasons at the piss-poor **Alien Escape** event at Madame Tussauds in London. Las Vegas has some pedigree in this arena, being the former home of the sadly closed **Eli Roth's Goretorium**. This was a million-dollar masterpiece. You were inside a horror movie with tons of practical effects and loads of actors in prosthetics. It closed with millions of dollars in debt, and I stated in this very column that this would likely be the last time anyone attempted anything on that scale. How wrong I was. Last month, AMC licensed the official **Fear the Walking Dead Survival Experience** in Downtown Las Vegas. There was no way Kris and I could resist paying this a visit and reporting back to STARBURST readers.

This was no **Alien Escape**. It did not quite hit the pinnacle of the **Goretorium**, but it was pretty damn close. **Walking Dead** fans are going to love this. You are escorted through an infected medical centre by the military. You enter through a malfunctioning lift and

are immediately subjected to animatronic zombies, actors in prosthetics, soldiers armed to the teeth, plus lighting and sound effects. It's very convincing, and crucially, the acting is definitely passable. This is scary and stressful, and nearly twenty minutes long (which seems like a lifetime). There are jump scares aplenty and a high stress level maintained throughout as you attempt to get to safety, not knowing where the next lunging zombie might strike from. The chaos culminates in a journey on a jeep, moved by hydraulics. You are given 3D glasses and a light gun to shoot zombies on a massive screen. This is tons of fun. You then make a run for it straight into (you guessed it!) the gift shop. This is an awesome experience. We had a blast, and can't recommend it enough. Downsides? On a couple of occasions, they make use of projected shadows of zombies. They used this in **Alien Escape**, and it didn't work there either, but this is a minor niggle in a fantastic event experience. AMC should

gain some sweet publicity from this genius piece of entertainment.

After avoiding security and fitting in a cheekily recorded episode of the **STARBURST Radio Show**, live at **Caesars Palace**, Kris had to bugger off home to Blighty, I was then joined by the director of **The Search for Weng Weng**, Mr Andrew Leavold, who stopping off before his screening and Q&A session the next day in Hollywood. The night started out at an Evel Knievel-themed pizza bar called **Evel Pie**. We then spent some time at **Atomic**, a bar famous for being one of the main vantage points from the atomic blasts of the 1950s. Then it was onto **The Sand Dollar** live music venue to watch a rockabilly band called the **Rayford Bros**, who changed mid-set into the '66 Batman on vocals, Robin on double bass, and the Riddler on drums. This is where we had our really deep discussion on the merits and continuity errors of the Hammer **On the Buses** trilogy.

The night ended with it being suggested that we hastily leave a dive bar-cum-karaoke venue (I don't think his **Steptoe and Son** impersonations were convincing them of our sobriety!). Andrew left for Hollywood, and I packed my bags to head back to the UK to continue working on this 40-year anniversary issue. I would love to say it was a relaxing break, but Kris and I were totally wiped out! Andrew had a good screening in Hollywood but sadly, had all of his book sale proceeds stolen at a tube station in Mexico City. Thankfully, his fans helped him out, otherwise he might have ended up stuck there. Andrew is a great bloke. A true eccentric. I have a feeling that STARBURST Magazine has not yet covered the last of his big screen exploits.

I got back home to find that you guys have had a volcano, and turned the sky and sun bright red. Can't leave you alone for a few weeks without you breaking the place. Any residual depression and jetlag were cured by the release of **Thor: Ragnarok**. This movie was certainly the antidote to being home and the pressures of deadline week.

Thor and Thor: The Dark World were amongst the more serious of the **Marvel Studios** output. **Thor: Ragnarok** wisely opts for a widely different tone with the directorial slant of Taika Waititi. I really rated his vampire flick **What We Do in the Shadows** and his style is just as irreverent here. **Thor: Ragnarok** is a radical shift in tone from the previous instalments, and is, indeed, primarily a comedy. I have heard some complain it may have gone too far in this regard, but I think this particular property needed some levity and a soft reboot. This film delivers both with aplomb.

The narrative is simple. Thor returns home to find his sister, Hela, the Goddess of Death, attacking. Thor ends up on Sakaar, where he meets up with the Hulk. At this point, there is a simplified version of the 'Planet Hulk' saga playing out. Thor breaks free from his confines and forms a posse to go back to Asgard and prevent Ragnarok. It's this simplicity of premise that allows the characters off the creative leash, and for Waititi to indulge with his own take on this previously slightly po-faced section of the **MCU**.

The cast all get their moments to shine. Hemsworth, free of the excellent but slightly miscast Natalie Portman, stops moping about and finally has some fun with the character. Tom Hiddleston does his scene-stealing turn as Loki. Newcomer Tessa Thompson is magnificently boozy and in everyone's face as one of my favourites from the original **Defenders** comic - Valkyrie. We finally get to see the version of the Hulk that I grew up with in the comics (hard to believe with all these versions over the last 40 years that we have never seen this 'child with the heart of a warrior' on screen before). Yet with all this talent on screen it is Taika Waititi himself that kinda steals the whole shebang with his CGI turn as Korg from the **Planet Hulk** comic, his pointed comment about a three-pronged fork being a hilarious callback to **What We Do in the Shadows**.

At this stage, **Marvel Studios** are on the longest roll in cinema history. How effortlessly Thor could drop in on Doctor Strange, without it feeling in any way forced, shows just how tight this cinematic universe is constructed. I have no idea how long this roll will go on, but I think it's best we just enjoy the ride and take advantage of a good thing.

So here we are. It's 40 years since Dez Skinn started this mag and it's weathered the storms. The magazine in your hands is the end of a forty-year journey, and the beginning of the next chapter. Happily, this column survives as well. I may not be around forever, but someone will always take the helm. Sometimes some people, who ought to know better, spend a mountain of cash on a total pile of shit. This column will always step up to the plate and call it out. Shame it tends to lose us some advertisers though... ✨

Jordan Royce can be contacted at jordan.royce@starburstmagazine.com
Twitter: @JordanMRoyce
and hosts the STARBURST Radio Show with Martin Unsworth every Wednesday 9pm until 11pm GMT on Fab Radio International - www.fabradiointernational.com
also available from iTunes as a Podcast

THIS TEAM IS PURE GENIUS.

SCORPION

WEEKNIGHTS 7PM

CBS  action

THE WORLD'S LONGEST RUNNING MAGAZINE OF CULT ENTERTAINMENT

☆STARBURST



www.buxtonpress.com

STARBURST wishes to thank the legendary Buxton Press for helping us get to this landmark issue, and for making our magazine always look so good everytime we go to print.